

Talbot House School, Newcastle upon Tyne

Hexham Road, Walbottle, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE15 8HW

Inspection dates

4–5 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires Improvement	3
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
Sixth form provision		Requires Improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leadership and management require improvement. The good practices introduced by the acting headteacher to review the school's work are not fully embedded. This is hampering the school's improvement.
- Although the trustees visit the school and monitor the good progress made in improving pupils' behaviour, they have relied too much upon information from senior leaders about pupils' academic progress.
- Teaching is not of good enough quality because of its variability, particularly in Key Stage 2. Teachers do not always use questioning and tasks to stretch all abilities in the class or give feedback on how pupils can improve their work.
- Inconsistencies in teaching mean that there is variability in pupils' progress, particularly for the most able. Teachers do not assess pupils' progress sufficiently regularly in lessons.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to read widely and often.
- The quality of provision in the sixth form requires improvement. This is because the curriculum, the quality of teaching and the use of assessment are not ensuring that progress is as good as it could be.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher's monitoring has, in a short space of time, led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The trust and the Chief Executive of the school have improved and developed financial systems effectively and attracted new funding in order to ensure solvency and probity of financial resources.
- The school makes a very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides them with a good understanding of how British values are fashioned.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of enrichment and sports activities that supports physical well-being and work-related skills that pupils will need for the future.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and say they feel safe.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent. Pupils value the support they are given to help them manage their emotions and behaviour.
- Parents speak highly about the staff in the school and the good quality of communication they receive about their children's well-being.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons across the whole school, of which four were accompanied by the acting headteacher.
- The inspector also met six pupils to talk about their work and experience of the school.
- The inspector met with a number of staff, including the acting headteacher and other senior and middle leaders. Meetings were also held with the Chief Executive, Head of Development, a representative from the local authority and trustees of the school. A telephone conversation was held with the Headteacher of Alternative Education in the locality which works in partnership with the school.
- The inspector looked at the work of the school, including pupils' behaviour, and analysed documentation in relation to attendance, safeguarding, self-evaluation and the school's system for checking on pupils' progress. The inspector, with the acting headteacher, examined pupils' work in different year groups.
- The inspector met with two parents and looked at the school's recent parental questionnaire. There were insufficient responses on the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be reviewed.
- The inspector evaluated the 12 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Talbot House School provides for pupils with severe social, emotional and mental health needs. Many have attended a number of different schools and some have had a significant amount of absence from former schools.
- The school caters for pupils aged seven to 18 years and currently supports five of the local authorities in the north-east region. There is also a small number of pupils attending from outside the region.
- Over half the pupils are disadvantaged and a similar proportion is in the care of the local authority, much greater proportions than seen nationally. The school receives additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, known as the pupil premium, to support the education of pupils in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Almost all pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys on roll than girls.
- The acting headteacher joined the school in February 2015 and the school is currently advertising for a new headteacher.
- The school is part of a trust which includes a residential provision for up to seven pupils. The last social care inspection was in January 2015 and the report can be found on the website www.gov.uk/ofsted.
- The school has a skills centre which provides vocational courses for the school. A few pupils from a local authority alternative provision access some short courses.
- The school itself does not use alternative provision, nor does it enter pupils early for GCSE examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils make good progress, particularly pupils in Key Stage 2 and including students in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring that work given to pupils matches their abilities so they all, and particularly the most able, are challenged in their learning
 - ensuring that teachers use effective questioning so pupils can provide deeper explanations of what they are learning
 - making sure pupils' progress is assessed regularly and consistently across all subject areas and that all teachers provide regular feedback on learning
 - sharing the effective teaching which leads to good quality learning in some classes more widely across the school.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - a permanent headteacher is appointed to ensure that practices are established fully and effectively to monitor the quality of provision and enable the school to have an accurate view of its performance
 - all the priorities identified to improve the school's work are monitored and evaluated carefully by leaders and trustees to assess their impact in order to plan the next steps towards improvement
 - senior and middle leaders monitor the evidence of pupils' progress and establish that it is of good quality
 - there are curriculum routes that lead to accreditation for sixth form students
 - the trustees, through better understanding, challenge leaders rigorously about the information they receive on pupils' progress, in particular for the most-able pupils in the school.
- Ensure that pupils have good opportunities to read widely and often by:
 - identifying opportunities in the school day for time for reading books
 - checking that there are good and regular opportunities in lessons to promote reading.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The acting headteacher has high aspirations for pupils and expects high standards from staff. Although he has only recently come in to post, he is driving change against a background of staff absence that has affected the school in the last 12 months. Many staff are responding to the greater accountability and others have left, making way for new senior leadership with a strong focus on improving teaching and learning.
- The trustees, acting headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have been successful in accessing new funding, improving financial systems and increasing admissions in order to ensure solvency, while addressing staffing issues to improve teaching. However, systems that contribute to self-evaluation are not fully robust because of the changes in leadership and the current headteacher operating in a temporary capacity.
- Actions to improve teaching further, through planning and use of assessment, are beginning to show an impact on learning, for example through greater engagement by pupils in lessons. Presentation of planning has improved to show individual outcomes of progress, but checks by senior and middle leaders are not always focused on the impact that teaching has on pupils' learning. This reduces the impact of management and appraisal of teachers' performance.
- The school has a broad and balanced curriculum, except in the sixth form. It provides good enrichment and enjoyment and offers pupils a breadth of experience in school and beyond, which helps them to learn about the world and prepares them for their future in modern Britain. Appropriate independent information and advice are provided which leads to most students accessing college places.
- The school has a positive and caring ethos which makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the fostering of very good relations. Pupils say that staff make sure they know the difference between right and wrong. Excellent relationships promote good understanding of equality, different beliefs and issues of discrimination.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements, with much effective practice strengthening the good care and support provided for pupils and their families.
- The primary school sport funding is being used well to support and extend the broad programme of sports activities in school. These activities are increasing pupils' participation and improving their physical and mental well-being.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding wisely. They have identified that the daily social enrichment programme provides valuable experiences for the development of pupils' social and emotional skills. Tracking of individual pupils shows improvements, as a result of the enrichment, in their behaviour and attitudes in social situations.
- The local authority has been very effective in providing a seconded, experienced leader until the appointment of a new headteacher. It has provided training for trustees and is continuing to support the review and development of the roles of new trustees. It provides reports on the quality of provision regularly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The trustees are totally committed to the school and its pupils. They have recently recruited new trustees who are bringing a broader range of experience and skills to the school. They are informed about the school's work and receive regular reports on the quality of teaching. They carry out visits and checks and assure themselves of the good behaviour in school. However, they are not using performance information on pupils' learning rigorously enough to challenge leaders robustly and to hold them fully to account.
 - The trustees have addressed the weaknesses the school has had with funding, through monitoring of finance and raising new funding to support the school. There have been changes in funding arrangements and commissioning of services in local authorities that have affected the school and had an impact on the stability of staffing. Trustees have well-established relationships with their funding partners and local authorities and are expectant of continued growth in numbers for the school.
 - As a school which provides residential provision the trustees receive regular Ofsted reports on the quality of care and well-being of students in the residential home. They are well apprised of their responsibilities and provide good support to this monitoring. The trustees are well informed about performance management processes and receive regular reports on the quality of teaching, salaries and improvements in staff attendance, resulting from recruitment of new staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**is good****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- There is a positive atmosphere around the school. Pupils are warmly welcomed each day, are happy to be there and ready to start their learning. Parents are pleased with their children's good attendance which, for many, is in marked contrast to their experience elsewhere. One parent said, 'The great amount of work by staff to help my son enjoy his learning and make him get 100% attendance for two years running has made him want to come to school.'
- In class, pupils show good attitudes to their learning and are supported well by highly skilled staff who ensure that pupils are calm and stress free. Comments from parents, staff and pupils are positive about the good standard of behaviour that they see in school.
- Teachers have high expectations for good behaviour and they monitor it closely in and around the school. This results in the noticeable improvements in behaviour over time for most individuals. As one pupil said, 'I have good behaviour here but not in my four other schools. They help calm me down.'
- Relationships are excellent between staff and pupils. As a result, pupils respond quickly to instructions and requests. The level of understanding of pupils' emotional needs contributes much to the progress that they make in their personal development.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know that if they have any concerns they can approach an adult who will help them to resolve any difficulties they are experiencing.
- Through the curriculum they learn how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school. Whether it is a science lesson or an ice-skating activity, they are apprised of how to act safely.
- Conversations with pupils reveal that they have a secure grasp of bullying. They report that bullying is rare and that they would not accept it in their school. They know there is always an adult on hand to talk to.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Teaching is not always planned and adapted well enough in lessons to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most able and pupils in Key Stage 2, are challenged in their learning. This means that, over time, they do not make the best progress of which they are capable, including in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- The school is not doing enough to learn from its own existing good practice in teaching. In classes where teachers demonstrate high expectations, pupils rise to the challenge of producing good quality work. For example, in a science lesson, two Year 11 pupils impressively recalled previous experiments with alkali metals and one pupil excitedly wrote the formula for rubidium and water on a whiteboard, unprompted by the teacher.
- Where teachers have good subject knowledge, learning is most effective. Pupils work with enthusiasm, sustain concentration and complete tasks with little support.
- There is not yet a consistent approach for giving feedback to pupils or marking their work. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give pupils time and encourage them to respond to questions. However, they do not always deepen their questioning and, therefore, they miss opportunities to help pupils develop their explanations in order to improve their learning.
- Use of information and communication technology (ICT) impacts well on developing pupils' literacy skills, promoting their work to be edited and better presented.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Most pupils, as a result of their special educational needs and disabilities, are working below national expectations when they start school. They enter the school at different times in the school year and often have had a number of changes in schools before they arrive, which has affected their progress and attendance.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make as much progress as other pupils in the school. The quality of teaching

is variable and this affects pupils' achievement, including that of the most able.

- In Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics pupils make good progress from low starting points. They have the opportunity to take a range of appropriate courses, including GCSE level courses. However, the most able in Key Stage 4 do not always achieve as well as they could, because many arrive at school after long periods of absence from previous schools.
- The school's data show that there are no significant variations in achievement between the various groups within the school. However, the use of the pupil premium funding is impacting well on those pupils at risk of disengaging from school through the opportunities they have to do specific activities which involve and interest them. Monitoring shows good improvements in their behaviour and participation. There are too few pupils to enable meaningful comparisons to be made between disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally.
- Pupils are not making good progress in reading. This is because there are insufficient opportunities for reading throughout the day to improve their fluency and further develop their comprehension skills.
- The achievement of pupils who attend the skills centre is not analysed or recorded separately by the school. Pupils from the school attend well and are learning useful rules and procedures to keep themselves safe.
- Older students are well equipped for their future lives through a wide range of work and community experiences. Their independence, social and work-related skills are well developed through a well-chosen range of activities.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The leadership of the sixth form requires improvement because it has not ensured that the quality of teaching results in good progress. This is due to insufficient monitoring of the progress that students are making.
- There is a very small number of students in the sixth form and the curriculum is, therefore, very personalised. However, curriculum routes are not well enough established and accredited to ensure that students are making good progress in both academic and work-related activities. However, the school is effective in developing students' personal skills and ensuring that they get good work experience and college places.
- In the sixth form, teachers demonstrate new skills well so that students eagerly want to engage with the activities. However, assessment of learning is not rigorous enough to show the small steps of learning taking place.
- Behaviour and attitudes are good because students are highly engaged in their activities and very respectful of the teaching staff. They are encouraged well to work independently and monitored closely on using safe practices in the practical areas.

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	133779
Local authority	Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number	449505

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils	7–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	2
Appropriate authority	The Trust
Chair	Chris Mathews
Headteacher	Deidre Pearson (Chief Executive), Mark Jones (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2012
Telephone number	0191 229 0111
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