

# Trentham High School

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

## Inspection dates

13–14 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, too many pupils have not made enough progress in their GCSE courses.
- Current standards of attainment are improving, but this is more marked in key stage 3 than key stage 4. This reflects the impact of previously weaker teaching and high staff turnover. Older pupils are still making up lost ground.
- In Year 11 in 2016, boys and disadvantaged pupils made slower than average progress in English. Strategies to promote their good achievement are still developing.
- The small numbers of pupils who attended alternative provision in 2016 made poor progress.
- Although teaching is good overall, sometimes teaching does not stretch and challenge pupils. Teachers do not insist that pupils describe their learning using key subject-specific vocabulary and this, sometimes, hampers their progress.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, while improving, has not improved as much as that of their peers. Some are still absent too often.

### The school has the following strengths

- Effective leadership, including the ambitious leadership of the headteacher, has successfully improved the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching is now good and pupils' outcomes, as a result, are improving.
- Effective accountability at all levels of leadership focuses the school's work on its core priorities. Leaders' stringent monitoring and feedback ensure that actions to address any weaknesses are effective. Clear deadlines are set for improvements to be achieved.
- Governors provide effective support and challenge, holding leaders to account for improving the school's effectiveness so that it becomes good.
- Good teaching ensures that most pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding and encourages pupils to think for themselves.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They are welcoming to visitors and speak positively about school. Older pupils recognise the many improvements made, including in leadership and teaching.
- Attendance has improved greatly over time and is now above average. Leaders have ensured that the number of exclusions has reduced.
- A culture of raising aspirations for all pupils is supported well through careers advice and strong partnerships with external organisations.

## Full report

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

- Improve outcomes so that all pupils make consistently good progress by:
  - ensuring that all teachers set tasks that stretch and challenge pupils effectively and require them to use subject-specific vocabulary
  - further developing strategies to promote the achievement of boys and disadvantaged pupils, especially in English at key stage 4
  - continuing to work closely with alternative providers to enable the small number of pupils learning with them to make good progress.
- Continue to build on and evaluate the strategies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The ambition and relentless focus of the headteacher, her senior team and governors are driving improvements successfully within the school. Staff who responded to the online survey have a clear understanding of the goals the school aims to achieve.
- Leaders are fully aware of reasons for poor progress over time and initiate robust strategies to improve outcomes. These include improvements to the leadership of teaching and learning, which are now good.
- Middle leaders now form an integral part of leadership and contribute to whole-school planning and review. Senior leaders have successfully developed middle leaders' skills, including effective evaluation of the quality of teaching and analysis of the use of data.
- Leaders are keen to work with others in gaining and sharing good practice. Leaders have established effective links with the City Learning Trust (CLT). The chief executive of the CLT is very knowledgeable of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Leaders have established a curriculum which is broad and balanced. It has undergone significant change so that pupils make choices from a wide range of appropriate options at key stage 4. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains suitable for pupils.
- A wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities are available at lunchtimes and after school. These include the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Junior Sports Leadership award, a STEM (Science, Technology, English and Maths) club, orchestra, art and sporting activities. These contribute well to pupils' personal and social development and support their learning progress.
- Leaders have identified the barriers to the rapid improvement of the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, particularly boys, in English. Leaders, including governors, are increasingly effective in reviewing the impact of their work in this area, including how extra funding is allocated. Leaders are already working to ensure that the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves further.
- Leaders and governors take staff morale seriously. Governors have received a report on the findings of a staff welfare survey. A group consisting of a cross-section of staff is working to improve morale even further.
- A strong reading culture exists across the school. Leaders are aware that this now needs to be supported by departmental work to develop pupils' literacy. Leaders check rigorously the amount of reading pupils do on their tablet computers from the school's virtual library. Teachers encourage reading for pleasure by sharing with pupils the books they currently enjoy.
- The school's work to support pupils who arrive in Year 7 with lower English and mathematical skills is effective. The extra funding these pupils receive is allocated efficiently to improve their progress. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud and to develop their understanding of texts. Pupils told inspectors that their spelling had greatly improved while at the school.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They gain a strong understanding of British values, which are displayed prominently around the school and which the school promotes in its day-to-day working. Pupils can explain how tolerance, respect and understanding are applied to the school community and how people of all faiths or sexualities are welcome.
- Staff, including newly qualified teachers, appreciate training opportunities. In addition to whole-school approaches, such as marking and assessment, staff develop individual training programmes depending upon their interests, skills and ambitions.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governance is effective. The governing body has a good range of skilled and experienced members. Governors are supportive of, and suitably involved in, the school.
- Governors hold senior leaders to account for bringing about the improvements needed so that the school's effectiveness becomes good overall. They seek evidence from a wide range of sources, including meeting with middle leaders and pupils who are members of the junior school leadership team.
- Governors have link responsibilities within the school. These include oversight of a specific subject or whole-school areas, such as pupil premium and special educational needs. This gives governors additional information to support their strategic planning.
- The governing body receives regular updates on aspects of the school, including the impact of pupil premium funding. The governors are also made aware of how the school rewards staff for good performance and how pay progression is withheld.
- Governors are committed to their own development. In addition to commissioning an external review, they have completed a skills audit and all received training on keeping pupils free from extremism and radicalisation. A number of governors have received school finance training.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Checks are made on staff when they are recruited to the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.
- Leaders ensure that all policies and procedures for safeguarding are kept updated. They are aware of any issues within the local community and work with external agencies if required.
- Staff have received relevant safeguarding training. They know how to identify any signs that pupils may be at risk and how to report safeguarding concerns.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe in the school and the clear majority of pupils who responded to the online questionnaire felt the same.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and staff who responded to the online questionnaires felt that the school is a safe environment.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved so that it is now good, including in English. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching through observations, current assessment data, feedback from external reviews and the quality of work in pupils' books. Improvements needed may take place through internal training or work with another school. More pupils, including boys and disadvantaged pupils, are now making better progress than in the past because of this stronger teaching.
- Relationships are positive in lessons, leading to a productive learning environment. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and, when given opportunities, will share ideas and be prepared to take risks as their thinking develops.
- Teachers display high levels of knowledge. In many subjects, they use this to good effect in setting probing tasks which develop pupils' understanding, for example in mathematics.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully to deepen their understanding. For example, in history, pupils can apply terms such as 'propaganda' and 'communism' when learning about the Cold War because they clearly understand their meaning following class discussion.
- Where learning is most effective, including for boys, teachers encourage pupils to think for themselves. For example, in French, pupils are encouraged to translate from French by initially identifying words used in English.
- Where learning is less effective, pupils are not given the opportunity to deepen their understanding through work which provides additional challenge. This slows the progress of most-able pupils.
- Teaching assistants work well within departments and with individual pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Teaching assistants are becoming more skilled at encouraging pupils, especially boys, to think for themselves and not to rely overly on support.
- Teaching assistants feel integral to the success of the school. When asked what the school needed to do to improve further, they were unanimous in saying that pupils needed to get even better results.
- The school's new assessment system to address changes in national assessment schemes is evolving. In its first year in operation, there were some inconsistencies between subject areas. New developments have not had time to show impact, but leaders evaluate and review assessment practice to drive further progress.
- The school has worked closely with parents in explaining national changes to assessment, including evening events looking at grading in English and mathematics. Information sent home to parents about the progress of their children is clear and informative.
- Pupils were unanimously positive about the school's 'Virtual Learning Environment' and how this supports them, including how it keeps their parents informed about homework.
- Teachers use technology effectively in lessons. For example, in music, pupils film themselves playing in a blues ensemble and analyse their playing to improve in preparation for a second performance.

- Pupils' learning in mathematics is supported by the effective use of keywords to clarify understanding. For example, pupils confidently use the precise meaning of mathematical terms and skilfully apply them in problem-solving techniques. However, this practice of referencing subject-specific terminology is not seen consistently within the school. For example, in science, some teachers do not insist that all pupils use key vocabulary to describe their learning. This hinders pupils' ability to offer detailed written explanations of the results of experiments.
- Teachers consistently use the school's planning sheet, which clearly identifies pupils' starting points and their performance in relation to targets. This means that the work pupils are given in class is, at times, varied based upon their ability. In English, for example, pupils are encouraged, but not directed, to aim high and occasionally select work of less challenge. This results in pupils, especially boys and the most able, not always making the progress of which they are capable.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good because they enjoy school and are well supported, including through effective teaching. These positive attitudes are celebrated. Pupils are proud to wear their 'star ties', earned for a good approach to their work and their involvement in the wider life of the school.
- Pupils benefit from leadership opportunities, including a junior leadership team which reports to the full governing body. This group of pupils helps the school to develop. Examples of their work include setting up a student behaviour panel, designing a new one-way system around the corridors, arranging trips and organising charity events. There are also opportunities for pupils to participate as house and sports leaders.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and the overwhelming majority of staff and parents agree.
- The school's personal, social, health and economic education curriculum and assemblies support pupils in keeping themselves and others safe. Pupils can explain how they learn about issues such as adopting healthy lifestyles and being responsible in relationships. The potential dangers of being exposed to extremism online are covered effectively in computing lessons.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare but where it occurs it is dealt with effectively.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The overwhelming majority of staff state that pupils behave well and any instances of poor behaviour are managed effectively by leaders. Pupils say that behaviour is much improved. This view is supported by exclusions having fallen since the previous inspection.
- A disproportionate number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special

educational needs and/or disabilities have been excluded in the past. This number is falling and the school is focused on reducing it even further.

- The vast majority of parents who shared their thoughts about the school during the inspection were positive. 'My child really enjoys school and all it has to offer and I think the school deserves recognition for its efforts' reflects a typical comment from parents.
- Attendance has improved greatly and is now above the national average. The work of school leaders, supported by an educational welfare officer, has continued to link the importance of attendance to outcomes. High attendance is celebrated through 'praise texts' sent to parents and rewards for pupils.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, but at a slower rate than that of their peers. This still impacts negatively on their outcomes. The school is developing further its work with parents and pupils to address this issue.
- The school works well in monitoring the behaviour, welfare and attendance of pupils in alternative provision. Communication is good, but the progress these pupils make requires improvement.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils in Year 11 in 2015 and 2016 joined the school with average attainment overall. They did not make good progress in their GCSE courses from their starting points. The proportion of pupils gaining good grades in English and mathematics was in line with the national average, although the proportion gaining the English Baccalaureate was above the national average.
- In Year 11 in 2016, from their starting points, the progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils in English was slow. The current progress of boys and disadvantaged pupils in the school, including those who are most able, is now improving but is not yet consistently good. These pupils are already a major focus for the school, particularly in English. Teachers can readily identify them and explain specific strategies used to support them.
- The progress of the small numbers of key stage 4 pupils who are in alternative provision is poor. This group consists almost exclusively of boys, many of whom are disadvantaged. The school is now planning closer liaison with alternative providers to improve outcomes for this group.
- A small number of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making the progress of which they are capable. They are absent from school too often.
- In 2016, the progress of most-able pupils was stronger than that of those from different starting points in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils, including the most able, gaining the highest grades was well above the national average in chemistry and physics. In 2016, boys and girls made strong progress in modern foreign languages.
- Most-able pupils are now making better progress than in the past, but this is still variable across different subjects. This is because some teachers stretch their learning

more effectively with appropriate tasks than others.

- Less-able pupils are making increasingly good progress and the school is focusing upon improving their literacy development to support this further. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud on a regular basis and to share their understanding of what has been read.
- The school has carefully analysed its results and put in place robust systems to improve pupils' progress. Personalised ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, along with new and more stable staffing, have improved teaching so that pupils are now typically taught well. A successful careers programme to raise pupils' aspirations is now in place. These actions are proving effective, especially for younger pupils whose progress has not been so influenced by previously weaker teaching and a high turnover of staff.
- Pupils are exceptionally well supported in terms of their planning for progression post-16. The school works closely with the local authority and local businesses. A careers adviser attends school for half of the week. All Year 11 pupils receive a careers interview and a progression plan. Younger pupils receive careers information through assemblies, as part of the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum and through annual careers events and informal drop-in sessions. In 2016, every pupil, including those in alternative provision, progressed to suitable education, employment or training placements.



## School details

Unique reference number	124388
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10020027

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 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	711
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Pate
Headteacher	Dr Rowena Blencowe
Telephone number	01782 883200
Website	<a href="http://trenthamacademy.co.uk">http://trenthamacademy.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:trentham@trenthamacademy.co.uk">trentham@trenthamacademy.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10–11 September 2014

## Information about this school

- Trentham High School is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school uses six alternative providers of education: Sporting Stars, REACH, Round 1, Phoenix, UNITY and Create-Ed. A small number of pupils at key stage 4 attend this alternative provision.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language are below national average.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 48 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors reviewed a range of pupils' books and folders.
- Inspectors visited a number of form periods, spoke to pupils informally around the school and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, support staff and pupils from all year groups.
- The lead inspector conducted a telephone interview with the chief executive of the City Learning Trust.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority. A telephone conversation was held with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at the start and finish of the school day, in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 102 pupil responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 59 parental responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 36 free text messages. The school's own analysis of parental feedback was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took into account 28 staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, the school development plan, quality assurance records, teacher training records, information about the progress of all pupils, records of behaviour, bullying and attendance, safeguarding documentation and minutes of meetings.

## Inspection team

Nigel Griffiths, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Walters	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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