

Inspection of a good school: Tottington High School

Laurel Street, Tottington, Bury, Lancashire BL8 3LY

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 November 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They said that they are happy and that they feel safe. They explained that most pupils are kind to each other. Pupils typically accept and respect the differences between themselves and others. Sometimes, pupils do fall out with each other, and bullying happens from time to time. However, teachers and leaders deal with such incidents effectively. Pupils said that there is someone to talk to if they have any worries or concerns.

Although leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, a small group of pupils struggle to meet these high standards. These pupils cause disruption to the learning of others. They do not move to lessons as promptly as they should and they are noisy in corridors.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. Many pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make progress through the improved curriculum. However, some pupils do not achieve well. This is because the design and delivery of some subjects across the curriculum are uneven.

Pupils have access to a range of enrichment activities at the end of the school day. These include the culture club where pupils share their diverse cultural traditions and clothes, or the Acceptance Without Exception (AWE) club, whose members raise awareness of LGBT+ matters.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have improved the school's curriculum. In doing so, they have ensured that all pupils, including those with SEND, have access to a broad and ambitious curriculum.

Pupils in key stage 3 can now choose from a greater range of subjects when selecting their options for key stage 4. Leaders are encouraging more pupils to study a modern foreign language. This is having some success. However, the proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects remains low.

Under the guidance of the trust, subject leaders are currently refining their curriculums further. In some subjects, leaders have identified the essential knowledge that pupils must learn. They have thought carefully about the order in which this knowledge should be taught. This helps pupils to build their learning securely over time. However, this is not the case in some other subjects. Here, teachers lack clarity about what pupils should learn and when this should happen. This prevents teachers from designing learning that builds on what pupils already know.

Teachers' subject knowledge is typically strong. Most staff use their expertise to deliver the curriculum well. In the main, teachers provide activities that help pupils to think carefully about their learning. Over time, teachers revisit topics and concepts to help pupils to remember more of their earlier learning. However, in some subjects and classes, teachers do not select the most appropriate activities to help pupils to learn subject content. This hinders pupils' progress through the curriculum in these subjects.

In most subjects, teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning. This helps teachers quickly address any misconceptions that pupils may have. When this happens, teachers adapt their teaching to address any learning that pupils may have missed or forgotten. Pupils use this information to help them to improve their learning.

Leaders have recently introduced systems to identify pupils who find reading more difficult. Leaders pinpoint the specific issues for individual pupils. Specialist teachers support pupils who have fallen behind in reading. These teachers provide effective support to help these pupils catch up quickly.

Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. They provide appropriate training to all staff to ensure that the specific needs of individual pupils with SEND are met. Teachers support these pupils well. This means that they access the same curriculum as other pupils in the school. These pupils keep up with learning in the classroom.

Around the school, most pupils conduct themselves well. They wear their uniform with pride. Most pupils follow school routines and they are punctual to lessons. However, a small group of pupils find managing their own behaviour difficult. These pupils are sometimes late for lessons. Sometimes they cause disruption to their own and other pupils' learning.

Leaders have developed a comprehensive personal development curriculum. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to discuss a wide range of topical issues. Pupils enjoy this learning. They spoke knowledgeably about fundamental British values, including the dangers of prejudice and extremism.

Leaders provide pupils with effective age-appropriate relationships and sex education and health education. Leaders also ensure that pupils receive high-quality independent careers

advice. Pupils benefit from suitable opportunities to meet local employers and to visit further education and sixth-form colleges in the local area.

Most staff said that they are proud to work at the school. They explained that leaders value them and appreciate the work that they do. Staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Trust leaders ensure that school leaders and staff receive prompt support to bring about improvement. Recently, this has been particularly true for improvements to the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed appropriate procedures to ensure that all staff identify and report potential safeguarding concerns quickly. Leaders take appropriate and timely action to provide support for pupils.

Leaders provide annual safeguarding training for staff. This, together with frequent updates throughout the school year, keep staff up to date with the most recent safeguarding developments.

Leaders work with the local authority and other local external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the appropriate and timely help that they need. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the personal development curriculum and through well-thought-out assemblies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Currently, there is a small group of pupils who misbehave when they should be learning. When these pupils misbehave, some pupils in the classroom struggle to learn everything that the teacher needs them to know. Leaders should ensure that they continue to support staff to implement the behaviour policy consistently well throughout the school.
- In some subjects, leaders have not developed the curriculum well enough to ensure that pupils are able to remember the essential knowledge that they need. At times, teachers do not take the most effective approach to deliver the curriculum. This hinders the progress that these pupils make through the curriculum. Leaders should finalise their curriculum thinking so that teachers know exactly what to teach. They should also ensure that teachers are suitably trained to ensure that pupils remember what they are taught.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Tottington High School, to be good in February 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146529
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10244626
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	933
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Meehan
Headteacher	Kristy Gardner
Website	www.tottington.bury.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Tottington High School converted to become an academy school in November 2018. When its predecessor school, Tottington High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Shaw Education Trust.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at two registered provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other school leaders and a range of teaching and support staff. Inspectors also met with the chief executive officer of the trust, the operational headteacher and the trust's curriculum adviser.
- As part of this inspection, inspectors conducted deep dives in history, English, science, and computer science. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons,

looked at pupils' work and spoke with pupils and teachers. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum and looked at books in some other subjects.

- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from key stages 3 and 4. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, the school development plans, leaders' self-evaluation documents and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding procedures. Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding in school. An inspector also checked the arrangements for pupils attending alternative provision.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors also considered the response to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Erica Sharman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lindy Griffiths

Ofsted Inspector

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