

Inspection of Tottington High School

Laurel Street, Tottington, Bury, Lancashire BL8 3LY

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Lee Barber. This school is part of the Shaw Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jo Morgan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Meehan.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are beginning to benefit from the actions that the school and the trust are taking to strengthen the quality of education that they provide. Most pupils welcome these changes. They recognise that many aspects of their school experience are improving. This is helping pupils to feel happier in school.

Pupils appreciate that they have an increasingly strong voice in the school. For instance, breaktimes have been extended in consultation with pupils. Pupil leaders feel reinvigorated. They wear their golden ties with pride. Some pupil leaders eagerly described the central role that they are about to take in the school's new approach to anti-bullying.

Most pupils are polite and well mannered. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is improving. However, weaknesses that have existed in the curriculum, together with some disruption to lessons in the past, have led to some feeling disheartened about their studies. Some pupils lack the motivation needed to be successful in their learning.

The trust has helped the school to raise its expectations of pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has strengthened the curriculum so that pupils learn increasingly well. However, inconsistencies in the delivery of the curriculum remain. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

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

The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and the areas that require development. It is working closely with the trust to bring about the necessary improvement. Some of this work has already made a difference. For example, the curriculum offer is much stronger and pupils' behaviour is improving. However, the turbulence in staffing has hindered the school's progress against its development priorities. This means that some of its work has not had enough impact to smooth out pupils' uneven journey through different curriculum areas. With the decisive action of the trust, the issues with staffing are largely resolved and the school is back on track. There is a firm foundation on which to build. Most staff appreciate the way in which change has been introduced. They welcome the work that is taking place to improve the school.

The trust and the school have prioritised developing staff's expertise in curriculum design. As a result, subject curriculums are well organised. They ensure that staff know what has to be taught and when pupils should learn subject content. This is helping to enable pupils to make smoother progress through a more ambitious curriculum offer. Staff particularly value 'curriculum conferencing' time when they work together to review and improve the curriculum.

The school has ensured that staff routinely use strategies that promote effective learning. However, there is inconsistency in teachers' understanding of how to deliver these strategies effectively within different curriculum areas. As a result, some learning activities do not help pupils to learn subject content. This includes strategies to help pupils to remember their learning over time. In addition, some teachers do not use the school's assessment strategies effectively to check that pupils' prior knowledge is secure before they introduce new content. Consequently, in some subjects, pupils' learning does not build securely over time. This hinders their achievement.

The school provides carefully targeted support for those pupils who struggle with reading. This helps them to make up for gaps in their reading knowledge. Recently, the school has raised the profile of reading. Even so, some pupils do not choose to read for pleasure.

Recently, the school has reviewed its provision for pupils with SEND. It identifies the needs of these pupils accurately. Staff receive useful information about how to support pupils with SEND. However, some staff do not use this information well enough to adapt their delivery of the curriculum. Some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should.

The school has strengthened its approach to dealing with the unacceptable conduct of some pupils. Although some parents and carers remain concerned, pupils and staff said that behaviour is improving. Typically, the atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly. In the main, pupils are respectful to staff. However, poor behaviour remains a barrier to learning for some pupils. The school has begun to provide well-thought-out support to help these pupils to improve their behaviour and to engage with their education.

Some pupils, including vulnerable pupils, do not attend school as often as they should. The school has prioritised improving pupils' attendance. It has suitable processes in place to reduce absenteeism. These are beginning to take effect.

The school provides an appropriate programme to support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils learn important information about fundamental British values and respect for people who are different from themselves. However, some pupils do not value this learning. The school has recently begun to increase the range of enrichment opportunities on offer to extend pupils' learning beyond the academic curriculum. However, there is more to do to increase pupils' participation to ensure that many pupils, including the most vulnerable, benefit from these opportunities to extend their interests and talents.

Pupils spoke particularly positively about the strong careers guidance that they receive. They are provided with a wealth of useful information to help them to make well-informed choices about their next steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff lack an understanding of how to use agreed learning strategies effectively. Consequently, on occasions, pupils, including those with SEND, do not learn curriculum content well enough. The school should ensure that staff develop their pedagogical understanding to enable them to deliver subject curriculums consistently well.
- Some staff do not use the school's assessment processes effectively to ensure that pupils' prior knowledge is secure before moving on to new learning. As a result, some pupils develop misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge that are not addressed. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise to use assessment strategies consistently well.
- Some staff do not use the information that they receive about pupils with SEND to adapt learning effectively to meet the needs of these pupils. This means that, at times, pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that it provides appropriate training for staff to enable them to help these pupils to learn successfully.
- Some aspects of the school's provision for pupils' personal development are limited, including pupils' engagement in a broad range of enrichment activities. This means that some pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, do not benefit from opportunities to develop their unique talents and interests. The school should take effective action to increase pupils' participation in enrichment activities and it should strengthen its approach to monitoring engagement to ensure that those pupils who will benefit the most are included.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	146529
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10294409
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	926
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Meehan
CEO of the trust	Jo Morgan
Headteacher	Lee Barber
Website	www.tottington.bury.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has an interim headteacher who has been in place since the start of the spring term 2024. The trust has appointed a permanent headteacher, who will take up post from June 2024.
- Since the previous inspection, a number of new staff have joined the school, including senior and middle leaders.
- The school uses one registered and two unregistered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical-education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography, modern foreign languages, art and design and computing. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. An inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the trust.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils’ behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses shared through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school’s self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils’ behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.

Inspection team

Sally Rix, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Phillip Walmsley	Ofsted Inspector
David Roberts	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Hammersley	Ofsted Inspector
Derek Yarwood	Ofsted Inspector

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