



Tanfield School, Specialist College of Science & Engineering

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 114293
LEA Durham
Inspection number 279357
Inspection dates 6 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Brian Blake

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Tanfield Lea Road
School category	Community		Stanley
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		County Durham DH9 8AY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01207 232881
Number on roll	630	Fax number	01207 282922
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Jim Brown
Date of previous inspection	1 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr Graeme Lloyd

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four inspectors.

Description of the school

Tanfield School, which is slightly smaller than the average size for secondary schools, obtained specialist college status for science and engineering in 2003. Although the school serves an area with some social deprivation, caused primarily by the decline of coalmining in the local area, the overall socio-economic standing of pupils is generally in line with that found nationally. The school has very few pupils from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above that found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Tanfield School provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education for its pupils. Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. In 2005, standards were below the national averages at the end of both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, but the progress of pupils is improving. Key Stage 3 English was below the national average in 2005, as was English literature, mathematics and music at Key Stage 4. The school did not meet the challenging targets it set for itself at either key stage in 2005.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy attending school. Behaviour in and around the school is good, although there are some parents and pupils who have concerns about the behaviour of a small minority whom they feel influence the learning and progress of other pupils.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some teaching that is good or outstanding. In lessons where pupils make the best progress, teaching is well focused with a brisk pace to learning. However, not all lessons consistently reach these high standards. Significantly, where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is too slow to ensure that all pupils make progress in line with their abilities. The school's specialist status has brought about significant improvements in the curriculum across the school, especially at Key Stage 4. Very good links have been established with a number of external partners, including many local businesses.

The school cares well for its pupils, and supports them effectively in making curricular and personal choices at key points in their school career. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some strong features. Senior managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses, but their evaluation of pupils' achievement and standards is higher than that of the inspection team. The recently appointed headteacher gives a clear vision for future improvement, and the school is generally well supported by its senior staff and middle managers. Recent action to address underperformance in mathematics and English is meeting with success. Lessons are monitored frequently by senior and middle managers, but the process is inconsistent in quality, with some teaching and learning being graded too generously. The governors support the school well. The overall capacity of the school to improve is good. Although money is used carefully and is targeted appropriately on areas that support the specialist nature of the school, the underperformance of some subject areas and the current overall satisfactory level of achievement and standards mean that the school achieves satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards improve in underperforming subjects, especially English at Key Stage 3, and English literature, mathematics and music at Key Stage 4.
- Develop strategies for more consistent and accurate monitoring of lessons, as an aid to raising standards and improving the quality of learning for all pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Standards on entry to the school are a little below those found nationally. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2005, standards were below the national average, and were markedly lower than in 2004. This is largely because of the notable decline in the results for English, which were below average. In mathematics and science, results were broadly average. The school did not reach the challenging targets it had set itself in 2005.

Results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2005 were much lower than in 2004, and were below the national average overall. However, the proportion of pupils attaining five or more good passes in the GCSE examinations was broadly average. Performance in English literature, mathematics and music was lower than in other subjects. Pupils did well in design and technology, French and information technology. The school did not achieve any of its Key Stage 4 targets in 2005.

Progress across the school is improving, and was above the expected rate in 2005. Progress between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 was satisfactory overall, although pupils did not do as well as they should in mathematics. The rate of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 was lower than in 2004. It was below the expected rate in English, above in science and broadly in line in mathematics.

The progress of the resource-based pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, when measured against the targets set for them. The progress of the remainder of those pupils on the special needs register is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils generally show respect for each other, respond well to teachers and other adults, and have good attitudes towards their learning. Behaviour in school is usually good, although some parents and pupils feel that the poor behaviour of a small minority is disrupting the learning of the majority; this is particularly so in lessons that are not well managed. Although attendance is satisfactory, the school is working to improve the attendance rates of some pupils, and also to decrease the relatively high exclusion rates. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school. Pupils speak warmly of the teachers who support them if they have problems, and most appreciate the many opportunities for after-school activities. Pupils feel safe and secure and believe that when bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. Members of the school council feel that their views are taken seriously and that they contribute positively to decision-making through attendance at governors' meetings, appointment of new staff, developing and evaluating new school menus, lobbying for better road safety measures and campaigning for new facilities in school. Pupils respond well to the school's encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles through regular exercise and healthy diets. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop workplace skills, especially in engineering related areas, in preparation for the world of work. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Almost all teaching seen was at least satisfactory, and some was good or outstanding. Where teaching is most effective, well planned lessons are matched closely to pupils' needs, which enable pupils to make satisfactory or better progress in their learning. The careful and sensible application of examination requirements by some teachers guide pupils towards well structured and well presented work. In the best lessons, learning activities give careful consideration to the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those capable of achieving very high standards. A particular feature of these lessons is the high level of expectation, and learning activities that challenge pupils to think for themselves. In those lessons where teaching is less effective, the pace of learning is slow for all levels of ability, with tasks that do not challenge or progress learning for the vast majority of pupils. Occasionally, this results in some pupils becoming restless, losing concentration and disrupting others in the class.

Most pupils know the standard they are working at, and the target that has been set to help them improve in the future. However, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work to reach this target. The marking of pupils' work is satisfactory overall, with some teachers effectively involving pupils in assessing their own learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good, particularly at Key Stage 4 where specialist status in science and engineering has added considerably to the breadth of pupils' learning experiences. A wide range of vocational choices, as well as traditional GCSE subjects, is available for pupils at 14. Developing expertise and resources are shared effectively with local feeder primary schools in an increasing number of curricular areas.

In Years 10 and 11, an alternative curriculum offered to support the small number of pupils who have a history of poor attendance is working well. Good support also helps pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make progress in line with their abilities. There is a good programme for personal, social and health education, as well as citizenship, which promotes pupils' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Good links with the local community enhance careers guidance, and the school has a developing, and well deserved reputation for training young engineers.

A good range of extra-curricular opportunities is provided, including extra GCSE subjects such as dance, drama and French.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good quality care, guidance and support for its pupils. Arrangements for child protection and health and safety, including risk assessment, are strong features and are effectively incorporated into daily routines. Frequent reviews of pupils' standards and development provide them and their parents with accurate assessments of personal progress. Underachievement is identified quickly and triggers extra help or intervention programmes. The school provides effective extra support for the most vulnerable pupils, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, using external experts and agencies in a well co-ordinated way. The school is successful in ensuring that those with the greatest needs access the world of work or continuing education after Year 11. Good quality advice on careers and strong links with local sixth forms and colleges ensure that most pupils are well informed about available post-16 choices. However, there are still some pupils who are still insufficiently prepared for the next phase of their lives after leaving the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, with some strong features. The recently appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of school which has been effectively communicated to staff and governors. The roles of senior and middle managers are well defined, and the school runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. Governors carry out their responsibilities well and have productive links with key aspects of the school's work. Performance targets are agreed by governors and are challenging but attainable. However, there are some underperforming subjects that cause the school to fall short of good achievement. Governors and senior staff are not content to allow this to continue, and although recent challenge to underperformance is resulting in some notable successes, weaknesses still remain. Lessons are monitored frequently by senior and middle managers as part of the drive to raise standards further. Clear and helpful targets for improvement are generated, but the process is inconsistent in quality, with some teaching and learning being graded too generously.

The school's specialist science and engineering programme has been managed well. It has brought considerable material benefits in terms of improved facilities in science, design and technology and information technology. Standards have generally risen and specialist subject targets have been met or exceeded. As developments take place, managers are careful to consider the views of staff and pupils to ensure that there is a common sense of purpose. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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Mr Graeme Lloyd

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8 March 2006

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the welcome that you gave to me and the other inspectors when we recently visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days in your school and were pleased with the way you behaved, and your willingness to talk to us about what it's like to attend Tanfield School.

We found that your teachers care about what you do, and they try hard to support you in lessons and in other activities that take place at lunch times or after school. Most of the teaching we saw was satisfactory, but some was good or outstanding. Where you had really good teaching, most of you made good progress and thoroughly enjoyed what you were doing. However, in some lessons we found that the pace at which you were expected to work was too slow and, at times, this affected how well you learned and the progress you made. You generally feel safe at school, and the vast majority of you feel that Tanfield is a good school. However, some of you and your parents feel that a small minority of pupils behave badly, which occasionally affects how well you learn and the progress you make. Your headteacher and senior teachers are aware of this and are continuing to work hard to stop these few pupils spoiling your lessons. We feel that the school provides you with a satisfactory and improving standard of education, although some subjects need to improve much more to ensure that all of you achieve what is expected of you.

We are going to ask the school to improve some of the things that it does. These include:

improve those subjects where standards are lower than they should be

develop a more consistent and accurate way of your senior teachers observing your lessons, to help raise standards and improve the quality of learning for all of you.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Brian Blake

Lead inspector