



Trentham High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124388
LEA Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number 281709
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Kathryn England AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Allerton Road
School category	Community		Trentham
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 8PQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 234534
Number on roll	718	Fax number	01782 234537
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Christopher Tombs
Date of previous inspection	11 May 1998	Headteacher	Ms Elisabeth Merryman

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 281709
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Trentham High School is a slightly smaller than the average school serving Trentham and Hanford, to the south of Stoke-on-Trent, where there is a mix of socio-economic conditions. Less than 10% of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are from a White British background and 3% of the pupils are at the early stages of learning English. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate, a view shared by the school in its self-evaluation, and pupils throughout the school are not achieving as well as they should. As a result, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

The school has taken steps to tackle underachievement and has focused on improving teaching and learning. Some progress has been made in planning using learning objectives, but teachers do not take enough account of pupils' starting points and their individual needs. Too often, work does not interest or challenge pupils and teachers talk for too long. Assessment data are not used consistently to guide planning. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate.

Pupils enjoy school. Their attitudes, behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. They are polite and show concern for each other. Pupils receive satisfactory levels of care, support and guidance. However, the ways staff check the pupils' progress and set challenging targets are unsatisfactory. The school's curriculum broadly meets statutory requirements, although too little time is allocated for mathematics in Years 10 and 11. The long-term absence of some staff has proved difficult to manage.

The key issues from the last inspection have not been tackled rigorously enough, and too little progress has been made. Senior staff do not consistently implement their improvement plans. The ethos within the school does not reflect a positive 'work ethic'. The school's managers do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. They lack current knowledge on teaching and assessment strategies which could challenge teachers to do better and support improvement. Monitoring of the school's performance is inconsistent and lacks rigour. The governing body does not act as a critical friend or hold the school to account for pupils' low achievement. As a result the school is not in a position to move forward without significant external support.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of leadership and management. Inspire, motivate and influence staff, building effective collaborative teams, so that rapid improvement is secured.
- Establish and implement a school plan to improve achievement and standards, rigorously monitoring its progress to keep development on schedule.
- Introduce a new 'work ethic' to the school through lessons and assemblies, with staff acting as positive role models.
- Engage in professional development so teachers and managers increase their knowledge, skills and understanding of assessment, integrating these into more interactive teaching that stretches each individual pupil to the full.
- Work

more closely with stakeholders and the local community to build more confident and profitable partnerships.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate and standards are too low. Standards have been below national figures for several years. Taking into account its context, the school is amongst the bottom 10% of schools nationally for the value it adds, indicating considerable underachievement.

The GCSE results in 2005, although showing some improvement over those for 2004, remain below average. There are considerable variations in the results between the different subjects. The school failed to meet its own targets and achievement is much lower than might be expected when account is taken of the pupils' starting points, which are a little above average.

Pupils make too little progress in Years 7 to 9, although standards are broadly in line with national expectations. The standards achieved in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in English are in line with national averages whilst standards in mathematics and science are below. Standards in mathematics and science were well below the school's own targets in 2005 for Year 9.

Pupils' progress in Years 10 and 11 is more assured but is not strong enough to provide the lift in standards that is required to bring the school's performance closer to the national average. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to other pupils with the additional support they receive. Girls perform better than boys in the GCSE examinations. Although progress in some lessons is broadly satisfactory, too often it is inadequate. This is the result of inadequate leadership and management, weak teaching and learning, inconsistent use of data to guide planning, insufficient time allocated for mathematics in Years 10 and 11, and staffing problems.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most pupils are polite, and show care and concern for one another. They show respect, enjoy coming to school, and like using computers.

The school's system for monitoring attendance and incidents of misbehaviour has helped to reduce absenteeism and exclusions. Attendance is satisfactory. Behaviour has improved and is better when pupils are engaged in activities which interest and challenge them.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In assemblies and lessons, pupils reflect on a range of moral and social issues and show respect for different cultures but opportunities are missed to raise pupils' spiritual awareness.

Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and many choose a healthy option for lunch. The new sports hall is appreciated by pupils, especially those who participate in extra-curricular activities. Pupils say that they feel safe from bullying and show care and concern for the safety and well-being of others. They are aware of the dangers of using the internet, and learn how to be safe from alcohol and substance abuse. Many are confident that they will receive the right kind of support if they have any problems. The school council contributes well to the community, raising money for charities. Participation in the citizenship programme and work experience provides a satisfactory grounding for pupils' future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Despite the school's drive to improve teaching and learning, the quality has deteriorated and is now inadequate. Senior managers evaluate teaching and learning through a programme of classroom visits. However, their evaluations do not accurately assess the quality. Managers have insufficient current knowledge of teaching and assessment strategies. They see assessment in isolation from teaching and not part of the whole process. They do not have the strategies to be able to support, guide and challenge teachers' performance. The result is that management does not have the capacity to improve teaching and learning.

In typical lessons pupils lose interest and behaviour deteriorates. They are not engaged because teachers talk for too long and are bored because many activities are mundane. The pace is slow because teachers do not keep them on task. Probing questions are not asked to check how much pupils know and understand. Too little time is spent evaluating how much pupils have learned. The result is that teachers have insufficient information on which to plan subsequent work and so their expectations are too low.

In the minority of better lessons pupils respond by working quietly and with purpose. They are engaged in well structured activities and are challenged with a variety of interesting tasks. They understand, because teachers provide clear explanations and check how much they have learned. The pupils make progress because of the teachers' high expectations, which motivate and help them to learn effectively. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported appropriately by the learning support centre and learning mentors.

Most teachers do not make consistent use of assessment data to track pupils' progress. They do not match their teaching to meet pupils' different needs. Few teachers mark well. There are significant inconsistencies in the quality of marking and the result is that some pupils do not know how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced and is satisfactory overall. All pupils have opportunities to experience learning in a range of subject areas including personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education. However, the quality of pupils' learning is limited, because of long-term staff absence across the curriculum, and because too little time is allocated for mathematics in Years 10 and 11. Gifted and talented pupils are not always challenged. However, provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory.

Older pupils are able to choose from a range of courses that meet their needs and aspirations. Initiatives such as the new courses provided in conjunction with other organisations have not yet had time to show any impact on standards. Work experience is well established and placements are well organised, but low standards in numeracy mean that pupils are not well prepared in every respect for their future economic well-being.

The school offers a wide variety of enrichment activities and many pupils take part in inter-school sporting competitions. A diverse range of visits and visitors enriches pupils' experience and enjoyment, such as the visit to the Wedgwood Centre.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is a secure place for pupils to learn and they receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Pupils feel that the school environment is safe. There is someone they can talk to for guidance, if required. Risk assessments, safety checks and child protection arrangements meet requirements. The learning support centre is used well to support pupils with learning and other difficulties.

Pastoral systems have been reviewed to improve care, and restructured into a year based structure. This has been successful and pupils' behaviour around the school is pleasant and orderly, and improvements have been seen in attendance, punctuality and reduced exclusions.

Procedures to track pupils' academic development and set them challenging targets have been implemented recently. However, inconsistencies in the use of assessment data impair the quality of guidance provided for pupils. The procedures have the potential to be a powerful tool in monitoring pupils' progress and raising achievement, but are currently not used rigorously enough. Pupils are concerned about the lack of good quality careers advice and guidance. This is a matter of concern as the school has not responded effectively to the recent retirement of the teacher with this responsibility.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate. There is no apparent vision from the leadership of the school to inspire a 'work ethos', or to motivate and influence staff. Staff absence is a problem. A significant number of parents are not happy with the school's response to queries and complaints, and parents are critical of the leadership and management team. Inspection evidence does not support the school's view that leadership and management are satisfactory.

Standards have not been raised sufficiently since the school was judged to be underachieving in 2004. The school has not tackled the basic issue of improving learning and achievement. Whilst the school's self-evaluation takes account of pupils' and parents' opinions from questionnaires, senior leaders are insufficiently aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and as a result their evaluation is ineffective in combating underachievement. Planning is inconsistently implemented with the effect that little is achieved. Consequently, the key issues from the previous inspection of raising attainment in national tests and GCSE examinations have not been dealt with adequately. Overall, senior leaders do not have the capacity to improve the school.

Financial controls are weak, and are only recently showing signs of improving. Rigorous systems to monitor expenditure and ensure probity in financial management are not in place. Difficulties in forward planning have led to an excessive surplus in the school's budget, and resources are not deployed effectively. The school does not run smoothly enough. Governance is inadequate. The new chair of governors supports the headteacher and has plans to improve governors' awareness, but the governing body does not currently hold the school to account. However, governors do understand the need to implement policies to tackle underachievement.

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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?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	4	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	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	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	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	No
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	No
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

Dear Pupils

As you are aware, four inspectors carried out an inspection of your school recently and spoke with many of you about the school and your work. We took your views very seriously, and I would like to thank you all for the contribution you made to the inspection.

The main findings from the inspection are as follows:

- Many of you should achieve higher standards by the time you leave school. Too many lessons are not of a good enough standard. In these lessons, teaching is not making the subject interesting or challenging enough for you.
- Some lessons are really interesting, keeping you all involved and on your toes, and helping you to become more confident. You told us you really enjoy these lessons.
- Your work is not marked regularly or thoroughly enough and you are not given enough clear guidance on how you can improve your work.
- You enjoy being in the school and feel that your teachers support you well, particularly when you have problems or difficulties.
- You contribute well to the community, especially through the work of the school council in raising money for charities and appeals.

We have asked the school to take action in a number of areas:

- Inspire, motivate and influence everyone so you all work together as a more effective team.
- Plan more carefully to improve the school.
- Introduce a 'work ethic' into school through your lessons and assemblies.
- Make sure all lessons are interesting and challenging, with teachers regularly marking your work and giving you advice on what you need to do to improve it. Your contribution will then be to make the improvements.
- Work more closely with partners in the local community.

Your school requires special measures. This means that the school will receive extra support, designed to help the headteacher, governors and staff make the necessary improvements faster.

We wish you well, and thank you again.

Kathryn England (Lead Inspector)