



Talbot House School Newcastle

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 133779
LEA Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 282384
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 28 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Andrew Margerison

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Hexham Road
School category	Non-maintained		Walbottle
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2290111
Number on roll	45	Fax number	0191 2674021
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Mary Greenwood
Date of previous inspection	1 January 2001	Headteacher	Mr Andy James

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 28 June 2006 - 28 June 2006	Inspection number 282384
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Talbot House School is a non-maintained special school situated on the outskirts of Newcastle upon Tyne. It provides day provision for students, mainly with emotional and behavioural difficulties, although an increasing number have additional and more complex learning needs. All students have statements of special educational need and are referred to the school by neighbouring local authorities. The school provides overnight respite care on two nights each week for a few students on a request basis from students or parents, but the provision of boarding is not a requirement of any student's statement of special educational need. All students are of White British origins and the majority are boys. A very small number are looked after by a local authority. When students join the school they have failed to cope with mainstream school due to their difficulties, so many have missed significant amounts of education. A majority have been permanently excluded from their mainstream schools. Other external agencies such as social services are involved with many students. As a result, most begin school with below average standards of attainment for their age.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Talbot House School is a satisfactory school. It has a significant number of strong features, which the school itself has accurately identified. Parents are generally pleased with the quality of care and education it provides. Standards of care are good and most students get good guidance to help prepare them for leaving school. From a low base, most students develop sound personal skills and behave satisfactorily in school. The curriculum is also enhanced well by a good range of additional activities that provide those students who join in with good opportunities to widen their experiences and personal skills. Senior managers, trustees and governors have a well-conceived, long term strategic plan for the development of the school and generally a good overview of its strengths. They have also accurately identified the areas in which improvement is needed. Subject leaders do not have a clearly defined role in monitoring their subjects. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the day-to-day teaching and learning, which overall are satisfactory. The teaching of mathematics is consistently good. However, writing is a weakness throughout the school. Overall, students achieve satisfactorily, but the effectiveness of the good aspects of the school's work in meeting the needs of all learners is diminished by a significant minority of students who do not attend regularly enough and, therefore, do not do as well as they could. Students who attend regularly, work hard and take advantage of the good opportunities for extra activities, make good progress. Students' achievement is affected by a lack of rigour in the school's procedures to track their progress over time. The school records students' progress in general terms in all subjects and aspects of their personal development, but records are not sharp enough to provide teachers with enough information to identify students who are not making sufficient progress. This means that teachers are not consistently able to set students targets for learning or to ensure that their marking of students' work really helps them improve their work. The school has recently reorganised its senior management structure in order to facilitate its long term plan which places it in a good position to move forward. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school.
- Improve levels of attendance by developing a whole school approach to promote the importance of good attendance.
- Involve subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and evaluating the progress students make.
- Ensure students make the progress they are capable of by improving the procedures to track learners' progress so that teachers and managers can easily gain an overview of students' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students achieve satisfactorily. All students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and most start at the school with levels of attainment below those expected for their age. This is due to spasmodic school attendance and other difficulties, mainly linked to their behaviour which has badly affected their learning. In the past three years, the school's results in Year 11 have gradually been improving and more students have gained GCSE qualifications in a broader range of subjects. This year, many of the Year 11 group have only been at the school for about two years and are a particularly challenging group in terms of their behaviour. School data indicate that all the students will gain a range of qualifications. However, few are likely to gain grades at C or above and only two are expected to gain a GCSE in English which contrasts starkly with mathematics and science in which all students are expected to get a pass at some level from G to C. This is mainly due to weaknesses in their writing. This is a consistent feature across the school. Students make good progress in speaking and listening and reading but, at best, satisfactory progress in writing. Across the school, students make good progress in mathematics and develop secure subject knowledge in science, although their investigative skills are not as strong. Students who attend regularly do better and achieve well relative to their starting point, but poor attenders achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Most students begin school with significant difficulties in behaving appropriately in school. Owing to the good care and consistent expectations of the school they make good progress so that behaviour is generally satisfactory. However, there are a few students whose behaviour is unpredictable and do not respect the school rules or social conventions. As a result, there have been three permanent and four fixed-term exclusions this year. Relationships are satisfactory, but students report that there is some bullying. However, instances are generally dealt with well. Attendance is below average. About half the current students have attended school for more than 80% of the time this year, but about a third have attended for less than 70% of the time which adversely affects their learning. The school recognises that this is a problem and has begun to review its procedures to improve attendance. Students learn to behave safely in different situations in and out of school and understand the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. However, a good proportion of students do not adopt these principles in their daily lives. For example, a significant proportion smoke. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the school community through the school council, but there is more scope for them to take responsibility around school. Those students who attend regularly and behave well develop secure basic skills. They understand the importance of having pride in their work, and benefit well from the work-related curriculum and extra activities such as outdoor pursuits and

school trips abroad. As a result, these students are well prepared for moving on to the next phase of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are strengths across the school which contribute well to students' academic progress and personal development. Teachers are consistent in their expectations of students' behaviour and relate well to students. Support staff make a good contribution to lessons and the management of students. Students' behaviour in most lessons is at least satisfactory, and any incidents are dealt with effectively. However, teachers' expectations of the quality of students' work is less consistent so the quality of students' handwriting and presentation varies significantly from day to day and across different subjects. In addition, worksheets are used too frequently and students are not expected to record their own ideas, views and opinions enough. Teachers' planning shows that lessons have clear aims and where activities challenge students they are keen and enthusiastic. However, lessons do not always have a clear structure or end positively. For example, on occasions, students leave the room as soon as the bell rings without waiting to be dismissed. This means that teachers are unable to check what students have learnt or to evaluate the success of the lesson. Some teachers set clear targets for students so they know what they are working on, but the marking of students' work does not often refer to these targets or give students sufficient guidance on how they can improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It meets statutory requirements and provides students with a broad range of activities to develop their academic, personal and vocational skills. Students have sufficient opportunities to use their numeracy and information and communication technology skills in different situations, but there are not enough planned opportunities for them to use their writing skills. The range of GCSE level courses provided for students in Years 10 and 11 has improved since the last inspection and the school has begun to introduce alternative qualifications such as the Award Scheme and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) programme to accredit other aspects of students' work. The work-related curriculum provides students with good opportunities to develop their workplace skills. These activities are not yet externally accredited to reward students for their efforts, but the school has plans in place to address this issue. The curriculum is enhanced well by visits and trips to various places locally and abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's work is good overall. The school provides a safe environment for students to learn and procedures for managing and assessing risk, child protection and the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. However, the procedures to promote good attendance are not as comprehensive. The school does tackle non-attendance on an individual basis, but there is no whole school approach to reward good attendance on a regular basis or to promote the importance of good attendance to students or parents. Students get effective support in lessons and on an individual basis they are provided with good guidance to help them make decisions on their future after school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the issues raised have been tackled effectively and other improvements have been made to the fabric of the building and the curriculum. Senior managers, trustees and governors manage the school well and have a good long-term plan for the development of the school. They have a systematic approach to evaluate the work of the school. Consequently, although the judgements the school made about itself were too generous, the school has a good overview of its work and has correctly identified the main priorities for improvement. However, subject leaders do not have a clear remit to monitor the standards or quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. In addition, the school's procedures to track students' progress are not rigorous enough to enable teachers to recognise those students who are not making the progress they should or to identify weaker aspects of different subjects. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the day-to-day work of the school that are not always noted quickly enough to have a positive effect on the progress students make over time. Nevertheless, the commitment of the senior staff, trustees and governors to continued school improvement places it in a good position to build on its solid foundations.

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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?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	4	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?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	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	3	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?	3	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	3	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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To the students of:

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NE15 8HW

28 June 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming me to your school this week for the inspection, for lending me your books, talking to me and letting me join in some of your lessons.

Considering the difficulties many of you have had in school, I was impressed by most of your behaviour and the way you all listened really respectfully in assembly. I think that you are well cared for and are taught well in some lessons. Those of you who attend regularly do well and are able to take part in a good range of different activities. However, there are too many of you who do not attend enough so do not do as well as you could. I have asked Mr James, the trustees and governors to try to improve your attendance. I have also asked them to improve your learning, particularly in writing, by working out ways to check more thoroughly how well you are doing and involve more staff in this process.

Thank you again for your help and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andy Margerison

(Lead inspector)