



Tapton School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107131
Local Authority Sheffield
Inspection number 287722
Inspection date 30 January 2007
Reporting inspector John Young HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Darwin Lane
School category	Community		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	11–18		South Yorkshire S10 5RG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2671414
Number on roll (school)	1144	Fax number	0114 294115
Number on roll (6th form)	453		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Caroline Bagley
		Headteacher	Mr D Bowes
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–18	30 January 2007	287722

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Tapton School is a much larger than average school, with specialist science college status. The majority of students are White British, with a quarter of the students coming from a variety of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The numbers who speak English as an additional language are in line with the national average. Most students live in the affluent western suburbs of Sheffield and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A minority of students live in areas containing significant pockets of deprivation. On entry into school, students' attainment is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Tapton has developed some extended school provision, involving breakfast clubs, additional lessons after school, adult learning and community use of the school's facilities and services. In addition, the school has gained the Sportsmark award and the Artsmark Gold, as well as Investors in People accreditation. The school has attained the Healthy School Standard and is an accredited training and assessment centre for the European Computer Driving Licence and the Microsoft Office SharePoint Server.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Tapton School provides its students with an outstanding quality of education. The combination of high standards, highly effective teaching, an inclusive, well balanced and extended curriculum, high quality academic and pastoral support and guidance, coupled with excellent opportunities to foster students' personal development and well-being represents outstanding value for money. This is underpinned and facilitated by leadership and management that are outstanding at all levels of the organisation, but

particularly amongst senior leaders and the headteacher. However, while the overall quality of assessment is good, the marking of students' work by a minority of staff is not

sufficiently evaluative and this occasionally results in less than useful feedback to students.

The impact of the school's provision is embodied in the bright, well balanced, articulate and confident students that it produces. The school's motto is 'valuing everyone; caring

for each other; and achieving excellence' and it certainly delivers. The strength of the school lies in the quality of its staff and the quality of the relationships that exist between

students and staff.

The standards students reach are significantly above the national averages. The progress students make during their time in the school is also outstanding overall. The school recognises that that a very small group of African boys, lower ability boys and lower ability girls did not make the same progress as their peers in the 2006 national tests

and examinations and is working strategically to ensure this does not happen again.

The headteacher has systematically built a team of highly effective leaders and managers at all levels of the school. They work well together and are committed to providing the best possible educational experience for the students. Led by the headteacher, they provide very clear educational direction. The school has not become complacent with its success and is constantly assessing and refining its practice. The school has been decisive and successful in addressing the areas for development

highlighted at the time of the last inspection and the headteacher has ensured that there

is very good capacity across the school to continue to improve the school. Governors are very supportive of the school but can also be challenging and act as 'critical friends'. Students excel at this school because the vast majority are well motivated, the school helps them to achieve and a culture of high expectations and success is actively developed. Consequently, students, irrespective of ability, receive a package of support that is individually tailored to their particular needs. The impact of the effectiveness and

quality of the school's provision is evidenced in the outcomes for students, which are outstanding. Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school's work. In particular, they comment that their children enjoy school, feel safe and are well cared for.

The school's specialist status is having a good impact on whole-school improvement. There has been significant investment in information and communication technology (ICT) and staff are using the new resources to make teaching more engaging and to involve students more in their own learning. In addition, a student tracking system, first

piloted in science, has been successfully rolled out across the school. Community links have been strengthened, especially with local special and primary schools, and bridging units ease transition into Year 7. The school has also successfully forged links with a higher education establishment and is collaborating on research into the training of science and mathematics students undertaking the Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form. Students benefit from a very wide range of activities, which support their excellent personal development, and they are very well-prepared for higher education. Students have no doubt that the sixth form's success is because of the staff. There are demanding entry requirements, which mean that attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average. The sixth form includes pupils who did not attend the main school. Retention rates are very good and the school works very effectively with a range of external organisations to enrich provision for students. Students make very good progress to reach the very high standards they need for progression to higher education. For some progress is outstanding. In the past year, 89% of students went on to study at university. One of the ways in which their excellent

personal development is sustained is through their working with younger students in a range of settings, from paired reading to physical education (PE) lessons. In addition, students take part in a whole raft of extra-curricular activities and enjoy not just a local but also a national reputation for their drama, music, debate and sport. Students are astute in their evaluation of what the school provides and rate the quality of teaching very highly, a judgement endorsed by the inspection. They did, however, feel that not all their work is marked to the same high standard, at the same time paying tribute to the helpful targets set by teachers on their work. Specialist status impacts very well on the sixth form. Students spoke with enthusiasm about the effective way in which staff encourage them to make use of new technology such as the electronic whiteboards to enliven their learning experience. The outstanding leadership ensures that students' views are acted on and that those with a role to play in the achievement of students are accountable. The sixth form provides superb value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the inconsistency that exists in marking students' work is eradicated.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The achievements and standards of students at Tapton are outstanding overall. In all key stages the standards attained are significantly above national averages. For example, in the 2006 Key Stage 3 national tests the proportion of students reaching Level 5 or better for mathematics, science and English was amongst the top 10% of schools nationally. The proportion of students achieving Level 6 or better and Level 7 or better was also significantly higher than the national average in all subjects. At Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE was also significantly above the national average, with 47% gaining either an A* or an A grade. In the sixth form, 63% of students achieved either an A or B grade in their exams.

Value added data shows that during their time in the sixth form students make good progress. In the main school the vast majority of students make outstanding progress. Groups, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, looked-after children and the visually impaired make at least good progress overall. This is also the case for the vast majority of Black and minority ethnic students. The school sets and invariably meets challenging targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are aware of their social and moral responsibilities and are proud to be members of the school community. They respect each other, the school environment

and staff. Consequently, standards of behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. An effective personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme ensures that students know how to keep themselves safe and, together with a wide ranging sport and PE programme, that they fully understand the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles. Development of their spiritual awareness is good, and all students study GCSE religious education. Cultural and multicultural development is also very good. For example, during PSHCE lessons and assemblies students are developing an understanding of the lives of people in developing countries. There is a recently established exchange programme with a school in Zambia for which students raise significant funds.

Students really enjoy coming to the school and this is reflected in their first class attendance and the active role they play in school life. They make a positive contribution to the local and wider community through their involvement in music, art and drama performances, fundraising and volunteering. Strong achievement, high retention rates and a high course completion rate demonstrate the extent to which sixth form students enjoy school.

Students are given various opportunities to assume leadership roles and to contribute to the decision-making process on 'big issues' such as the appointment of new staff, changes to the curriculum and the introduction of healthy food in the school canteen, which they undertake with relish and great maturity. Relationships with staff are superb and students value the school's 'zero tolerance' approach to racism and bullying. Students are well prepared for life beyond the school and this is reflected in the very high proportion of students who go on to employment or further training when they leave the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's own monitoring suggests that the majority of teaching is at least good with some that is outstanding and inspectors agree. The impact of teaching is evidenced in the excellent progress most students make. The relationships that are nurtured between students and the staff manifest themselves in positive attitudes to learning and an extremely productive learning atmosphere. Teachers and students hold equally high expectations and this mutual ambition contributes to the success students enjoy. Typically, teaching is engaging, very well planned and challenging. It is tailored to the individual requirements of students, and is informed by good data which tracks student progress and allows teachers and students to assess and review progress before establishing development targets. Students are actively encouraged to produce their best, with a range of learning mentors, learning support assistants and welfare officers well deployed to provide further support. A supportive cycle of monitoring teaching and learning by senior leaders is helping to identify strengths and development needs.

In particular, the school has identified teachers' additional training needs and arranged appropriate support.

Whilst there is some inconsistency in marking students' work, which means that they do not always receive useful feedback, increasingly, the most accomplished staff are sharing best practice. This is helping to strengthen the consistency of the quality of teaching that students experience. A number of the school's departments have been designated as lead departments in the authority and regularly work alongside colleagues in other schools. The school's involvement with the National Science Learning Centre also supports staff and the further development of teaching and learning. Teaching is not yet outstanding overall because there remains some inconsistency, which the school is working effectively to remove. Student's achievement is positively influenced by their superb attitudes to learning and the excellent care, guidance and support they receive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Curricular provision is outstanding. It is broad and well balanced and meets the needs and interests of the students. More recently, it has been expanded successfully to provide a number of vocational opportunities such as a national vocational qualification in catering, an applied GCSE in engineering, and for basic skills training. Many of these courses are facilitated by the good links established with local business and neighbouring partners.

An extensive enrichment programme complements curricular provision. There are enhanced opportunities for students to study triple science, additional mathematics and ICT, which are delivered after school. Students also benefit from a variety of exchange trips and off-site visits. Students undertake work experience and some have extended work placements, which prepares them well for life beyond the school. Through good links with local partners, a range of enterprise and business-related activities are organised. They receive good careers advice and guidance, attend mock interviews and draft job applications. Year 11 students wanting a more vocational experience go on college 'taster' days, while some sixth form students are involved in the Aim Higher programme, which encourages students from non-academic backgrounds to attend university.

The sixth form curriculum is broad, and offers 31 courses. A very good enrichment programme enables many students to participate in a range of interesting activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, 'world challenge', communication skills, critical thinking and the Young Enterprise programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided to students is very impressive. A feature of the school's work is the way in which it acts proactively to support the development of all the students. A wide range of professionals, including learning mentors and student support officers work collaboratively to provide high quality care and support for all students. In addition, a number of targeted groups, for example those at risk of underachieving, receive additional support such as one-to-one mentoring and extra tuition. There is a weekly inclusion meeting where the individual needs of students are discussed. Child protection procedures are robust. Staff know the students very well and even those students presenting the most challenging behaviour and/or the lowest literacy levels experience some success. There are few exclusions. In extreme cases a 'withdrawal' room acts as an internal exclusion room. After counselling, mentoring, boundary-setting and time for reflection, students are reintegrated into normal classes. A lot of work is done on building self-esteem and raising confidence levels, particularly amongst the more vulnerable students, and in supporting lonely or isolated children.

Major aspects of academic and pastoral guidance are excellent. On the whole, students benefit from clear and coherent arrangements to assess, monitor, evaluate and adjust targets based upon effective use of the available data. Transition arrangements as students enter and progress through the school and beyond are first rate. Study clubs, reviews and academic mentoring enrich provision further. The school works closely with parents to maximise the impact of these strategies.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding at all levels. Since his arrival, the dynamic headteacher has set about fundamentally restructuring the way in which the school operates and has placed learning and individual student achievement at the heart of all his strategies. Together with his very able senior team he is providing very clear educational direction and has created a common sense of purpose among staff. He has very astutely identified influential staff and empowered them to lead key developments. By devolving some responsibilities, he is not only building capacity within the organisation, but has also secured exceptional levels of commitment from staff right across the school. The introduction of the 'change team' ensures that staff at all levels feel consulted and part of the decision-making process.

Areas for development from the last inspection have been successfully tackled. Students' standards and their achievements continue to rise. The systematic way in which the performance of the school is assessed, evaluated and refined is testament to the desire to improve the school further. The school knows itself extremely well

and takes account of the views of all its stakeholders. The results of impact surveys show that there is a high satisfaction rate among the parents and students. The strategic deployment of resources to secure greater access to ICT across the school was particularly well received and is further evidence of the impact of managers in tackling a previously identified weakness. Shrewd financial management has enabled the school to expand despite a falling budget.

The school is very supportive of staff and their development needs and they benefit from an on-going training and professional development programme that is informed by the whole-school development plan. Rigorous performance management is undertaken and the staff are held to account for the effectiveness of their work.

Governors undertake their duties very well. They hold the school to account through rigorous challenging of members of the senior leadership team when they make proposals. A number of governors are linked with departments and make regular visits into school and they have a clear view of how the school is operating. The school has built outstanding capacity to continue improving.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking to us and making us so welcome on our recent inspection visit. We saw your lessons, looked at your work and read the results of questionnaires completed by you and your parents/carers: they proved to be very helpful.

Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- You receive an outstanding all-round education, and the leadership and management of the school is excellent.
- During your time at the school, the vast majority of you make tremendous progress and the standards you reach in national tests and examinations are significantly above the national averages.
- You contribute greatly to your own success by having very positive attitudes to learning, displaying both excellent behaviour and attending regularly.
- The staff are experts in their fields and use their skills admirably to develop your knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach.
- You really enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are confident any concerns you have will be dealt with appropriately.
- The curriculum is excellent and is well matched to your needs and interests. You have access to a wide range of extra-curricular art, music, sports and drama activities, which you participate in enthusiastically. Some of you take extra subjects after school.
- The quality of care, guidance and support you receive is first-rate and you recognise and value the school's efforts to help you succeed. Equally, you appreciate the good relationships that you have with staff and feel the school does a good job of supporting your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is encouraging you to develop a range of skills and experiences that will contribute to your future economic well-being.

The staff in your school are very aware of what needs to be done to improve your school further. However, we have asked the school to ensure that the inconsistency in marking is effectively tackled.