



Tewkesbury School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115756
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290329
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Geoff Hancock

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ashchurch Road
School category	Community		Tewkesbury
Age range of pupils	11–18		GL20 8DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01684 292152
Number on roll (school)	1413	Fax number	01684 850742
Number on roll (6th form)	327		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Fiona Holliman
		Headteacher	John Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	24–25 January 2007	290329

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Tewkesbury School is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school. The school has achieved both Technology and Language College status. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and live close by. The level of deprivation in the community is below average and the proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well below average. There is very little movement of students to and from other schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. The headteacher has only been in post since September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tewkesbury is a good school that has a number of outstanding features. Students of all abilities are welcomed into a caring, supportive yet challenging environment where they are given every opportunity to develop into well-rounded, responsible and successful young people.

The students enter the school with above average standards and make good progress so that, by the end of Year 11, standards are well above the national average; this represents good achievement overall. In the majority of subjects students achieve well and in a few, such as mathematics, achievement is outstanding. The school has worked hard to improve those subjects that are not as strong, and recent improvements in subjects such as English demonstrate the school's capacity to improve. The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students are well behaved, mature, helpful, enthusiastic and proud of their school. The school is particularly effective at moulding students into mature, responsible young adults. It does this by giving them a clear understanding of right and wrong and ensuring students take responsibility for their actions. The quality of care, guidance and level of support for students is good. The students feel safe in school and whilst there are very occasional incidents of bullying these are dealt with effectively. Most students understand the importance of leading healthy and active lifestyles.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the best lessons, students are totally engaged by teaching which is challenging, focused and superbly planned. However, in some lessons there is a lack of focus on what students of all abilities need to learn and often students are too passive because they are not given enough opportunities to become actively engaged in learning. The school has developed an outstanding curriculum that enables students of all abilities to study courses which are well suited to their personal needs. The school has been innovative in developing partnerships with other schools and institutions. This is a particular strength of the school which enriches the opportunities and experiences of the students. The school's technology and language specialisms have given a drive and direction to the school's planning which has led to improvements in many areas of the school and expanded the nature and variety of the curriculum.

The leadership and management of the school are effective and there are many strong departments. The new headteacher has made a noticeable impact in a short time and knows what needs to be done to make Tewkesbury into an even better school. The vast majority of parents and students are happy with the school and value it highly. Whilst the leadership has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, in general their judgements are more generous than those of the inspectors. This is largely because judgements made by the school are not consistently based upon the impact that the teaching has on students' achievement. However, new robust procedures for monitoring teaching and learning have been developed and these are leading to a more consistent approach to self-evaluation across the school. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Recent improvements

and the clear vision of the new headteacher and senior leadership team demonstrate that the school has good capacity to become an even better school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form at Tewkesbury is a great place to be. Standards are above average and have risen year on year, reflecting good teaching and learning. The students are a credit to the school. Their behaviour, maturity and responsible attitudes are a testament to the outstanding way that the school nurtures their personal development and well-being. They benefit from a good curriculum and an extensive range of enrichment and community-related activities. Students enjoy being in the sixth form, and rightly feel that they are exceptionally well cared for and guided. Leadership and management of the sixth form are first rate. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that teachers' planning focuses explicitly on challenging learning outcomes and includes a variety of active and engaging tasks that meet the needs of students of all abilities.
- Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning so that judgements better reflect the impact of teaching on students' performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are rising at all key stages in the school. At the end of Year 9, standards are above average. In 2006 students exceeded the targets that were set for them. Significant improvements in English now mean that achievement is satisfactory; achievement in mathematics is exceptional. From Years 10 to 11, progress accelerates so that by the end of Year 11, the percentage of students who achieve five grades A* to C is well above the national average; this represents good achievement throughout the school. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to other students and no groups of students underachieve. Progress in English language and literature lags behind the other subjects, but work seen during the inspection confirms the school's view that English is now much improved.

Standards in the sixth form have been rising year on year and are now above average on academic courses and well above average on work-related courses; this represents outstanding achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most enjoy school, behave well and have positive attitudes to learning, especially when teaching in their lessons is lively and stimulating. Attendance has improved markedly since last year and is now above average. Students say that they feel safe because any bullying is dealt with effectively by staff who have their genuine interest at heart. Students participate enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular activities ranging from creative and performing arts, to sporting activities, outdoor education and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Students are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. As a result, students have a clear understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The large numbers of students who attend additional physical activities and the growing number who choose healthy meals show this.

The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Whilst opportunities for reflection are limited, there is a positive ethos in the school which is reflected in the students' good attitudes, attendance and respect for one another. Students develop good social skills as they progress through the school and most show awareness of the breadth of cultural and ethnic traditions in the wider community. Students' contribution to the community is outstanding with young people taking the opportunity to be involved in mentoring, voluntary work, fund raising and representative activities. Skills to enhance their future economic well-being are good, with focused opportunities for enterprise and work-based activity built into many aspects of their school life.

The outstanding personal development and well-being of students in the sixth form are reflected in the behaviour, attitudes and responsibility of the young people. Students enthusiastically engage in a wide range of activities and make every effort to act upon the outstanding guidance given. One student summed up the school's approach succinctly by saying, 'They never give up on anyone.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best lessons involve exceptional planning which ensures that learners of all abilities are given challenging, enjoyable activities that engage them totally. These lessons are taught at a cracking pace and are thoroughly enjoyed by the students. Not all lessons are like this and some are a little pedestrian and too teacher directed. In these lessons, students are often too passive and are not given enough opportunity to become actively involved. The planning of lessons is usually good although there is a lack of consistency in the approach, and

some teachers do not focus clearly enough on what students are going to learn. As a result, the work set is not always pitched at the right level for all learners. Expectations of behaviour are high; whilst this leads to calm, purposeful lessons, in some lessons students are not encouraged to participate fully, which tends to lead to overly passive learning. Students know their predicted grades and most have an idea of what they need to do to improve. Teachers work hard and often go the extra mile to make sure that students achieve their best; students say how much they value this and most agree that they are making good progress. Additional funding from the specialist status has enabled the school to develop advanced skills teachers who have a key role in the drive to improve teaching and learning.

Sixth form teachers are knowledgeable enthusiastic specialists who often have a passion for their subject. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best lessons are taught at a brisk pace with challenging tasks that stimulate the students' and develop in them the skills to work independently. As a result of consistently good teaching, careful monitoring and their well developed independent learning skills, students make exceptional progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The outstanding curriculum provides students of all abilities with a rich and varied experience which contributes hugely to their enjoyment and success. The school has rebuilt the curriculum to make sure that every student from the most able to those with specific needs has a personal range of courses that best suits them; this is no mean feat. Different pathways enable students to choose between traditional academic subjects or a mix of traditional and new work-related courses. Of particular note is the way that the school uses its links with local schools and colleges to enable this variety and choice to happen. The impact of the language specialism is the opportunity to study Spanish and Italian, along with the traditional modern languages of French and German. Many students enthusiastically take part in the many lunchtime and after-school activities provided.

There is a good curriculum in the sixth form which meets the needs of most learners. Whilst the curriculum has a good range of academic courses, inspectors agree with the school that broadening its range of courses would make the sixth form a more attractive option for some students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are good. Procedures for ensuring students' safety are robust, with efficient staff recruitment arrangements and clear child protection practices. Students feel confident in approaching staff for help if they need it. 'They listen to you,' said one Year 9 student. This view is not shared by all parents. However,

students told inspectors that this is one area of the school that has changed significantly since the arrival of the new headteacher. The tutor group 'issues box' in every classroom is a clear commitment to students' safety. The school is improving the way it tracks students' academic progress and these procedures are now robust; however, not all teachers use the system consistently as a focus for raising achievement. Support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and for those who are looked after, is good and this enables them to make good progress through the school.

Care and guidance in the sixth form are outstanding. Students value the high commitment of their teachers and appreciate the support given in deciding future pathways. Teachers keep a close eye on students and none are invisible. Any students who are not doing as well as they should be are identified promptly and action is taken including involving parents and carers. There are many examples of students who have 'stuck it out' and have gone on to be successful in either university or employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership and management of the school are good. At all levels, leadership is focused on achieving the best for all students and this ethos has a positive impact on students' achievement. The headteacher and senior leadership team have identified appropriate priorities for improvement, such as improvements in the analysis of data to monitor students' progress. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met, yet whilst they are highly supportive, they need to be more precise in their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to provide an effective challenge to the school leadership. Students value new approaches to promoting good behaviour and also the new house system which one older student explained helps develop 'the community/family feeling in the school'. The school's recently improved procedures for self-evaluation are robust and the most recent reviews have been carried out thoroughly. Overall, the school has a good understanding of its strengths and what needs to be improved, resulting in appropriate action plans to address them. However, self-evaluation is not as accurate as it could be because not all leaders focus sufficiently on what value is added when judging how well they are doing. For example, not looking at students' progress when judging achievement or what and how well they have learned when judging teaching. The most successful departments use self-evaluation to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, and in subjects such as mathematics this has led to the raising of achievement. The school has a good capacity to improve and is well placed to become an even better school.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The impact of this can be seen in the sustained improvement in achievement over recent years and the wonderful caring and vibrant atmosphere that is generated.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	2	

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	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed spending time in your school. Thank you all very much for the open and frank way that you spoke to us.

Many of your parents and carers responded to a confidential questionnaire and we also took your views and concerns into account when making our judgements. You told us about the things you like, what you feel the school does well and the improvements that have resulted from the Technology and Language status that your school has. I encourage you to read the report, but this letter is to let you know what your school does well and what would help it to be even better.

We think that Tewkesbury is a good school with some outstanding features; the sixth form in particular is brilliant. The results that you achieve are well above the national average at GCSE and above average in the sixth form; this is a result of hard work from both you and all the school's staff. We agree with you that since the arrival of the new headteacher there have been a number of positive changes and we believe the school is well led and managed. We are glad you feel listened to. This is very important because we were very impressed by your mature attitudes and honest appraisal of what the school does well, and not so well. You are well cared for and there is a very good range of subjects for you to follow. It is important for schools to work with the local community so that you can gain experiences that will help you after you leave school; this is something that your school does well. We were particularly pleased to see that many of you are making the most of the many out-of-hours activities that the school works hard to provide, and that you understand the need to live and eat healthily. We think that the standard of teaching is pretty good and sometimes outstanding. We know that your teachers explain to you how well you are doing and we agree that many of your teachers do their utmost to enable you to achieve well. In your best lessons teachers do not just talk to you and ask you questions, they give you a range of interesting and exciting tasks that help you to learn effectively; we have asked the school to make sure that more of your lessons are like this. We have asked the school to check progress even more closely so that it will know precisely how well you are all doing, what works well and what can be improved. We think that by doing these things, Tewkesbury will become an even better school.

Once again, thank you all very much for talking to us. I wish you every success in the future.