



Tarleton High School, A Community Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119752
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291532
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Sonya Williamson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hesketh Lane
School category	Community		Tarleton, Preston
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire, PR4 6AQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01772 812644
Number on roll (school)	878	Fax number	01772 817901
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Finch
		Headteacher	Mr Anthony Hardiker
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	15–16 November 2006	291532

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Tarleton High School has had specialist college status since September 2004. The school is below average size, although the number on roll has increased rapidly in recent years. The school is popular and students travel from a wide area to attend it. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. The academic standards on entry to the school are broadly average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Pupil mobility is slightly less than in most other schools. Students' home backgrounds have higher than average social class and low levels of deprivation. The school has developed extended school provision through community use of many of its facilities. It has held Investor in People status since 1997.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tarleton High is an effective school which achieves high standards and meets the needs of its students well. Parents and students value the academic and personal support provided. The sports hall and swimming pool are good resources for the school and the community. However, conditions in the learning environment, much of which is poor quality, are cramped. Teachers work hard to overcome the accommodation difficulties and the students respond with good behaviour. Students have good opportunities to take responsibility and contribute ideas. However, opportunities for reflection to develop spiritual awareness are insufficient. Specialist technology college status is having a positive impact on the quality of learning resources available and is enabling the school to make good progress towards meeting its challenging targets. The school works well in partnership with large numbers of primary and secondary schools and colleges to enrich learning opportunities for students in the school and across the local region. Good examples of this are initiatives to develop and support modern foreign languages in associated primary schools and to enrich the Key Stage 4 curriculum through a local federation.

The school knows itself well, although it is in the early stages of making good use of data and assessment information to analyse discrepancies in achievement and ensure that all teachers address students' individual needs. It has simple but clear priorities for improvement that all those involved with the school understand. It is aware that teaching, learning and achievement, although good overall, are not as good in Key Stage 3 as in Key Stage 4. Students' personal development and well-being, leadership and management, care and guidance and capacity for improvement are all good. Effective progress has been made since the last inspection and high standards maintained. Staff are supported through good professional development. Targeted training and work with partners helps to enrich the knowledge and understanding of staff. Governors give high priority to funding strategies for improvement and ensure good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' progress during Key Stage 3 so that all students achieve as well as they can.
- Make better use of assessment and tracking data to inform improvement planning and ensure that all teaching meet students' individual needs.
- Develop opportunities to promote students' spiritual development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Students achieve well overall and reach standards that are above average by the end of Key Stage 4. They make slower progress at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Progress accelerates through Years 10 and 11 and good GCSE results have been maintained for several years. In

2006, just over three quarters of students gained five or more A* to C grades, exceeding the specialist college target. However, only around half of the students gained five A* to C including functional English and mathematics. While this is in line with the national average, it is less than could be expected given their high standards and achievement overall and may affect their future employability. Very few students leave school with no qualifications and virtually all students gain five or more grades in the wider GCSE A* to G range. This represents good achievement given the students' starting points and reflects the inclusive care, support and guidance given to all.

There are no significant discrepancies in achievement between different groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are, however, differences in the relative performance across subjects, where results in art, drama, music, physical education (PE) and religious education are significantly higher than those in geography, German and statistics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students get on well with each other and their teachers and most like school. They enjoy the opportunities it provides inside and outside school hours. This is reflected in their attendance, which has steadily improved to be above average. The school has an orderly and calm atmosphere. Students behave well in lessons and satisfactorily around the school. They feel safe, secure in the knowledge that bullying is not tolerated and that any instances of harassment are dealt with effectively.

Students contribute well to school life; for instance, through the student council or by acting as 'buddies' for younger students. Students' moral and social development is good. They have a well developed sense of right and wrong and benefit from school initiatives to boost their moral stature and to encourage their support of the local community. They instigate their own ideas to support charities. Students' appreciation of cultural diversity is satisfactory and is developing rapidly through recent drives to promote it. Opportunities for spiritual reflection are underdeveloped and not planned across the wider curriculum. Students are keen to adopt healthy lifestyles and many teachers promote this, in PE, for example. In response, school meals now offer a range of healthier options. The school currently holds 'Healthy Schools' accreditation. Students make good progress in acquiring many of the skills that will equip them for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons are planned carefully so that work is matched to students' abilities and specific needs. In these lessons, the teachers'

good subject knowledge and high expectations result in effective learning and rapid progress. Probing questioning, within a variety of challenging activities, helps engage students in their work and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding at a lively pace. Trusting relationships are founded on mutual respect and are the basis of successful lessons where behaviour is consistently good.

In the small proportion of lessons where rates of progress are slower, expected learning outcomes are not shared sufficiently well with students. Tasks are less well devised to suit students' levels of attainment and fully engage them.

The school's use of the new system for tracking performance ensures that teachers and teaching assistants understand students' performance well. Departments use the data to set challenging and realistic targets. However, while some subject departments make good use of the information to plan their lessons, its use in directing students about how to improve their current performance is inconsistent.

Specialist college status impacts positively on the quality of teaching and learning. Although not all teachers have easy access to equipment, information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to stimulate learning in many lessons. The use of a virtual learning environment provides online information for students and engages them widely in debate on current issues such as health and the environment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements, which was not the case at the previous inspection. As a specialist college, the school provides a balanced curriculum but places an appropriate emphasis on technology by, for example, ensuring that students study ICT for at least two periods per week. The curriculum has improved and is now more responsive to the needs of individual students. In Years 10 and 11, the school offers a wide range of vocational and practical courses improving curriculum provision, particularly for those students who are less motivated by traditional academic courses. There is an increased degree of flexibility: for example, the 'Language Ladder' course maintains the contact of older students with foreign languages by emphasising cultural dimensions of the subject. This successfully promotes the enjoyment of languages and gives good opportunities to enhance cultural development. A good range of extra-curricular activities support and extend learning and promote achievement and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and valued by students and parents. There is a strong commitment to students' welfare. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by all staff. Good links with outside agencies ensure that students at risk receive the specialist support they require. The curriculum educates students well

about health and safety. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessment, receive careful attention making the school a safer place in which to work.

There are good links with primary schools and, as a result, transfer arrangements for Year 6 students are smooth enabling them to settle in quickly.

Older students are well prepared for work, further education or training.

Special needs staff work well with students and parents to help students overcome their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision in the inclusion unit is good and staff work well as a team supporting students' needs. The systems for monitoring students' academic and pastoral development are becoming more effective at identifying underachieving students and those with learning difficulties, but are not yet consistently applied across all departments.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers of the school are effective. They set clear direction and ensure that improvement priorities are correctly focused on how teaching and learning initiatives can be used to raise standards and promote the personal development and well-being of learners. Self-evaluation is rigorous and gives the school an accurate understanding of its major strengths and areas for development. It is based on accurate and extensive checks on a range of information that includes observations of teaching, scrutiny of students' work and gathering students' views. Leaders and managers are beginning to make more extensive use of assessment and tracking information to identify issues and consider levels of success but this is still in its early stages and is not yet used to analyse trends and discrepancies. Self-evaluation involves teachers and managers at all levels so that they understand what strategies are most likely to bring about improvement. As a result, good progress has been made in addressing the majority of issues from the last inspection, achievement remains good overall and standards are high. Good practice is effectively shared and weaker subject departments are suitably supported, although pockets of weaker middle management remain. The school is inclusive and promotes equality of opportunity. There is a particular focus on raising students' self-esteem. A purposeful atmosphere and good behaviour are achieved despite the poor quality of the accommodation, which does impact negatively on the quality of the learning environment. However, governors make sound financial decisions that result in good value for money since they are so closely linked to improvement priorities. Governors provide challenge as well as support to the school. They work closely with the heads of subject departments and invite students to participate in their discussions. They support leadership and management in developing wide ranging links with external partners for the benefit of the students. Recruitment of staff and systems for staff restructuring in relation to government initiatives are robust and help to ensure quality of care, guidance and teaching for students.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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
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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Tarleton High School, A Community Technology College

Hesketh Lane

Tarleton

Preston

Lancashire

PR4 6AQ

15 November 2006

Dear Students

Thank you very much for the positive way in which you contributed to our inspection. I know your school regularly consults you to give your opinions and ideas about school, so you are used to expressing yourselves with confidence. We valued the open way you spoke with us in the focus groups and in lessons.

We collected lots of information about the school from you, your parents and teachers, the governors, from documents, from visiting lessons and looking at your work. We agree with your headteacher and the other senior staff that Tarleton High is a good school where you achieve high standards. In fact, all aspects of the school are good. The headteacher and senior teachers frequently check on how things are going. Teachers are effective in helping you to learn and support you well personally. The school cares for you well and the curriculum gives you good opportunities to follow your interests. You are provided with a good range of clubs and activities outside lessons and many of you make helpful contributions to the local community and charities. Even good schools can get better still. So, the areas we have asked your school to improve are listed below.

- Your progress during years 7 to 9 is not as good as in Years 10 and 11. Those of you in Years 7 to 9 and your teachers need to concentrate even more on ensuring that you all do as well as you can.
- The school has lots of data about how well you are doing. However, the school could make better use of the information when deciding about how to improve the school and when planning lessons or telling you how to improve your work.
- You need more opportunities for quiet time to reflect on the things you see and experience through school.

On behalf of the team of inspectors I would like to wish you all continuing success and enjoyment of learning for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sonya Williamson HMI