



Sir Thomas Boughey High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124393
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292980
Inspection dates 22–23 November 2006
Reporting inspector Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Station Road
School category	Community		Halmer End
Age range of pupils	11–16		Stoke-on-Trent ST7 8AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 729400
Number on roll (school)	732	Fax number	01782 729421
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Bob Edwards
		Headteacher	D Boston
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	22–23 November 2006	292980

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Sir Thomas Boughey High School and Co-operative Business College is a specialist business and enterprise college associated with the Co-operative movement. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and almost all pupils have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need is in line with the national average but the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. Most year groups join the school with average standards, but the year group that took GCSE examinations in 2006 were above average when they started the school; on average they had made nearly a term's additional progress.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective school. An overwhelming proportion of parents agree. The school works well in partnership with others, particularly through its specialist links. Its self-evaluation is accurate and many improvements have been made that were recommended in the last inspection. Child protection arrangements are now satisfactory, although some staff have not had recent training. The school has good capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

The school's specialist status and strong links to the Co-operative movement have had a major impact on standards and achievement, which have improved considerably in the last two years. Progress is very good during the first three years, especially in English and science, and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards improve from being average when pupils join the school to above average in national tests at ages 14 and 16.

An important factor in the good progress and achievement is the close attention paid to pupils' personal development. The school's systems for support and encouragement recognise the individuality and different needs of each pupil and appropriate support is provided for those in danger of missing their targets. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop confidence and the ability to work with others. This has been enhanced by the Co-operative enterprise days, which help pupils understand ethical issues such as fair trade. Pupils enjoy school, respond well in lessons and behave outstandingly well. As a result, the classrooms are calm and ordered learning environments.

Teaching and learning are effective because most teachers are good at breaking down learning into manageable steps. Close attention is paid to examination requirements, to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve. This is particularly effective with pupils who join the school at or below the expected standards for their age. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils scope for independent thinking and for using their initiative, but this aspect was underdeveloped in the majority of lessons seen during the inspection.

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The specialist college status has been a catalyst for review and change. The curriculum has been restructured to meet the needs of all pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully by senior and middle managers. There is a strong culture of collaborative work in the school and all forms of success are celebrated well.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are effective overall. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning does not focus enough on the quality of learning. Responsibility for quality assurance and improvement planning in this respect is shared among several people, making it difficult for the school to maintain the sharp focus that will be needed to further raise achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the coordination of measures taken to improve teaching and learning.
- Take further measures to ensure that teaching develops pupils' understanding and their ability to think and learn independently, particularly for the more capable pupils.
- Ensure that all staff have their child protection training updated regularly.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good overall. The school's specialist status has had a significant impact on achievement. It has been the catalyst for the school to set more challenging targets and to support pupils to reach them. In the last two years, the school has significantly increased the proportion of pupils getting five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, from 46% in 2004 to 75% in 2006.

The standards of work for pupils joining the school at age 11 match the national average. By age 14 standards are well above average because pupils make very good progress in Key Stage 3, particularly in science and English. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 4 is now strong in optional subjects following a revision of the curriculum. GCSE mathematics standards are now just above average. However, GCSE English results did not improve in 2006 and remained below average. The English department has identified the reasons and taken appropriate action. Pupils are now progressing well and standards are rising.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Within the school, there are only small differences in the achievement of boys and girls and among pupils with different levels of prior attainment. The progress of the most able pupils is not quite as strong as others in the school. Boys in the school make better progress than boys in other schools who have similar backgrounds. The main reasons for the good overall achievement are the pupils' good attitudes to learning and teachers' good use of assessment to identify for pupils what they need to do to reach the next level. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to think for themselves or take responsibility for their own learning, and this sets a limit on the achievement of the most able.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school is a very pleasant place to be in because the pupils are considerate, polite and orderly. Attendance is good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy school and want to learn. They work hard and collaborate with each other effectively during lessons and in the many extra activities they participate in. This contributes to their good achievement and helps to prepare them well for the world of work. The specialist college link contributes an understanding of business and the Co-operative philosophy of collective self-help.

The pupils feel safe and are confident that the staff will support them when they have any difficulties. Bullying is rare and pupils say that any incidents that do arise are dealt with effectively. They are confident in expressing themselves but some pupils feel that not enough notice is taken of their views. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They have a good knowledge of a variety of cultural traditions across the globe, but a limited appreciation of the cultural diversity that enriches life within the United Kingdom.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Staff create a good climate for learning, where pupils respond very positively to teachers' high expectations of their behaviour and commitment. Learning therefore occurs in a focused, purposeful atmosphere.

Pupils make good progress, often doing better than expected given their prior standards. This applies particularly to lower and middle attaining pupils who achieve well in their examinations. Pupils are set by ability in many subjects and work is usually well matched to their needs. Teaching assistants give effective support to pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, both in the support unit and elsewhere, so they achieve as well as others. The ablest pupils do not always achieve top grades. Some teaching styles constrain independent thinking, restricting opportunities for these pupils to show enough initiative.

Assessment is good overall. Teachers make good use of school data to understand pupils' standards and then set sensible targets which motivate them well. Pupils know how to achieve these and value the interventions which occur to support them if they fall short of their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good, meeting local needs and statutory requirements. The school has increased the vocational aspects of the curriculum and improved religious education in Key Stage 4, two key issues from the previous inspection. Curriculum provision for personal, social and health education is good. Good use is made of extra-curricular activities, school visits and trips.

The school's specialist business college status has been an important factor in curriculum improvement. Business and enterprise activities help to develop the skills of cooperation and collaboration and they develop pupils' financial and business understanding. Many subjects have introduced a business focus for one or more units of study.

The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 provides a strong foundation for future progress and is enriched by elements of enterprise and business education. It also contributes to

pupils' personal development, their understanding of citizenship and their use of information and communication technology (ICT). In Key Stage 4, pupils have a wide range of subjects to choose from. Pupils' progress and attainment have been improved by reducing the total number of subjects that they study, making more time for English and the remaining optional subjects. The most able pupils are offered separate GCSE sciences and early entry to ICT and mathematics. Pupils who are not motivated by an academic curriculum are offered a broad based, practical education involving vocational courses and work related learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well and give them good pastoral support. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to discuss issues, for example in personal, social and health education lessons. Recently improved tracking systems provide staff with a clear picture of how well each pupil is doing in each subject. This information is used well to identify pupils at risk of underachieving and to provide extra help where required. The mentoring system is particularly effective in matching pupils' weak areas with the staff best placed to help them. Pupils with learning difficulties have their individual needs assessed and appropriate support is given so that they make good progress. However, a small number of pupils regularly miss lessons in the same subjects each week, including physical education, to receive this support. The school is aware of this issue and is considering how to address it. Child protection procedures are adequate, but staff training is not fully up to date. The school complies with current regulations to vet all adults working with the pupils and to maintain a record of this vetting.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The specialist college bid focused staff effectively on a clear upward direction and standards have improved since this status was granted. Partnerships have widened the frame of reference for managers, who now liaise closely with others to move the school forward. Middle managers and other staff are well involved in school improvement planning, creating a strong sense of common purpose and corporate commitment. Self-evaluation is accurate. Good pupil progress and the high quality of care demonstrate the school's success and there is good capacity to improve further.

Monitoring and evaluation are good overall, but responsibility for assuring the quality of teaching and learning and the related improvement planning is largely devolved to subject leaders. Although this work is monitored by the senior team through the line management system, no individual has a clear overview of the whole school. Much monitoring of teaching occurs, but this is not always sufficiently focused on progress and achievement. In contrast, analysis of test results is good, providing departments and teachers with a good basis on which to create improvements.

The governing body has a good understanding of financial and other aspects of the school and provides good challenge and support for the headteacher. Staff use good resources well, especially ICT which provides an important tool for learning in most subjects. Classroom displays are usually stimulating and accommodation constantly refurbished to create a pleasant learning environment.

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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	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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

This letter is to tell you the results of your school's inspection. The inspection team would like to thank you all for your cooperation and help during our visit. You and your parents told us how much you liked your school and how your teachers worked hard on your behalf. We enjoyed talking to you and we agree that you have a good school. We were particularly impressed by your considerate attitudes and by your behaviour, which were among the best we have seen.

The school is well led and managed. Mr Boston and his team understand what is good about the school and what needs to improve. Everyone works together and the specialist college link with the Co-operative movement is helping the school to get even better. You enjoy the enterprise days, which help you understand world issues like fair trade.

Your classrooms are calm and well ordered so everyone has a chance to learn. There is a good range of subjects to meet the needs of all pupils. Your progress is monitored carefully by your teachers. The school treats you as individuals and tries to find the right support and encouragement for each of you. You make good progress and your school's examination results are above average. The school helps you to be more confident and prepares you well for adult life.

Your teachers are good at breaking down learning into manageable steps. They make sure that you know what you need to do to improve and to pass examinations. This helps you to learn but we felt that your teachers sometimes did too much for you. The school is encouraging teachers to let you think more for yourselves and to help you to understand more deeply. This is already happening in the best lessons, but we have asked the school to make sure that more lessons help you to think and learn independently, and to get a deeper understanding of what you are learning.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you all the best for the future.