



# John Taylor High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 124394  
**Local Authority** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 292981  
**Inspection date** 18 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** David Martin HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Dunstall Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Barton-under-Needwood
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Burton-on-Trent DE13 8AZ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01283 239300
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1143	<b>Fax number</b>	01283 239333
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	304		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	David Lees
		<b>Headteacher</b>	D M Osborne-Town
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 September 2002		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection date</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	18 January 2007	292981

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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

This school is a larger-than-average specialist science college serving a relatively advantaged though mixed rural area. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is around the average but the school is 'wheelchair accessible' and welcomes students with learning difficulties and disabilities from beyond its catchment area. A very small proportion of students have English as an additional language and relatively few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

John Taylor High School is an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school. This vision is communicated well to an able and experienced senior team, middle leaders and staff teams, who turn the vision into practice. This excellent, consistent management means that agreed practice is firmly embedded across the school. The work of the school is thoroughly monitored and evaluated. Improvements are carefully planned and implemented, always making a real difference for students. Governors support and challenge the work of the school and work well in partnership with the senior team. As a result, there have been significant improvements since the last inspection and there is excellent capacity for further improvement. The school knows its strengths and self-evaluation is very accurate, if a little modest.

The school's management has focused closely on further improving the already high attainment of students, yet balancing this with the care and support that are so valued by students and their parents alike. This has been done by staff agreeing what good teaching and learning should be. There has been substantial training and support for staff, who have accepted the challenge of refining practice with energy and enthusiasm. This has created a consistency in planning and practice that is quite unusual in a large school.

This consistency has led to sustained high standards at all key stages. All results are significantly above the average and some are outstanding. All groups of students in the main school make equally good progress, demonstrating excellent care for the individual. This is backed up by the intelligent use of data to track students' progress. Most important, adults at all levels intervene to support those who show any signs of failing to make expected progress. The fine tuning of marking and feedback has been rightly identified as a priority for further development.

Concern for the individual is not confined to academic success. Students feel very well cared for and relationships are excellent. Students are trusted and, in return, show a remarkable level of maturity. The school provides many opportunities for taking responsibility within the school community and these are taken up with enthusiasm. The quality and variety of enrichment opportunities within and beyond the curriculum are outstanding; students feel genuinely involved in the school community. The curriculum is carefully tailored to students' needs and aspirations, although the senior team has correctly identified the need to widen the 14 to 19 curriculum to include a broader vocational programme. Specialist status has significantly improved provision and achievement in mathematics and science.

It is the enjoyment of learning and excellent attitudes of students that are most obvious to visitors to the school. What underpins this is the dedication of adults, combined with the thoughtful, ambitious approach of the headteacher to managing continuous improvement.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

One of the main reasons why John Taylor High School's sixth form is outstanding is the way it is integrated into the life of the school. Senior students organise mentoring for Year 7 and 'reading buddies' for Year 8, chair the school council and manage fund-raising activities. All students undertake some form of responsibility during the sixth form. The take-up of these wide-ranging opportunities is excellent and they enable students to develop unusually good leadership skills. Students speak proudly about how they support staff and pupils through their contributions. Not only does this benefit their own personal development but it contributes significantly to that of younger pupils through the role models presented. Taking into account the high retention rates, high standards, good progress and a high success rate for entry to higher and further education, students do exceptionally well in the sixth form. They respond very well to the consistently challenging teaching, with a very mature attitude towards their learning. They value the guidance and advice they receive about future careers and educational opportunities and enjoy the exceptionally positive relationships they have with staff. The curriculum matches the needs of most students well, although the number and level of vocational options available reduces opportunities for some potential students. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent and its well-thought-out integration with the rest of the school is a hallmark of its distinctiveness.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Implement plans to offer a broader 14 to 19 curriculum, particularly in developing more vocational elements.
- Fine tune the consistency of marking and target setting to match the consistency of the overall planning and the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enter the school with prior attainment that is above the national average. By the end of Key Stage 3, they attain standards that are exceptionally high. This is particularly true in science and mathematics, where such standards have been maintained over several years. English results were equally good in 2004 but fell away in 2005. The school has taken effective steps to correct the situation. As a result, the 2006 results in English are almost as good as those in the other core subjects. Students also attain high standards in all other subjects. The progress made from students' starting points represents outstanding progress, particularly in mathematics and science.

At Key Stage 4, students continue to make good and, in some areas, outstanding progress and achieve above-average standards. It is significant that all groups of

students achieve equally well and make similar progress, demonstrating the school's commitment to each individual. This includes students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The proportion of students obtaining five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is particularly high, meaning that the great majority of students have the ideal platform for future academic success. Significantly, nearly all subjects perform equally strongly at GCSE.

Students continue to make good progress in the sixth form and achieve standards well above the average. Targets are ambitious, but the school has a good record in achieving them and confidence that it will do so.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

There are many outstanding aspects of students' personal development, including their social and moral development, their behaviour and their choice of healthy lifestyles. Students are listened to and have a real involvement in the school and participate in all that the school has to offer. The school council is very active and has made significant contributions to the running of the school. Above all, students show an unusually high level of enjoyment and engagement in the classroom and beyond. Behaviour is exemplary.

There is a wide range of sporting activities available and these are enjoyed by many students. The school has made a very positive response to 'healthy eating' initiatives. The comprehensive Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme reinforces these messages and students show an awareness of the need to live healthy lifestyles and to stay safe. Students' spiritual and cultural development is good. There are many other clubs and activities available in many areas, including a range of trips and visits and public performances.

Attendance is very good. Students report little bullying or unkind behaviour, and say that the rare serious incidents such as racist comments are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school makes great efforts not to use exclusions. Temporary exclusions, usually for one day, have been effective as students rarely re-offend and very few students have been permanently excluded. Students are trusted and, in return, show high levels of dependability, confidence and maturity.

Students are well prepared for their future lives by excellent progress in basic skills. They work well together and take up the many leadership opportunities that the school provides. They also contribute to the school and to the wider community through a range of charitable work for local, national and international causes. The school warmly welcomes visitors and gives many opportunities for students to be actively involved in the community.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The school identifies the great majority of teaching as good or better, with no unsatisfactory teaching and much outstanding practice. Feedback from students and analysis of the lessons observed during the inspection confirm that this is the case.

The consistency of planning, structure and delivery of lessons is impressive. Lessons have clear objectives and a lively pace. They have several phases of activity, using different teaching and learning approaches. There is a high level of student engagement throughout lessons. Teachers' knowledge and expertise are strong and they adopt an understated yet consistent approach to managing classrooms. Questioning is good and all students are encouraged to participate fully. The school has rightly identified the encouragement of independent learning as the next step in its development. It has good plans for this, including giving more control of learning to students where appropriate. Assessment practice is good at a whole-school level and teachers are encouraged to set meaningful targets in each subject so that pupils know what they need to do to improve. Although very good in many lessons, marking and feedback to students are not yet sufficiently consistent, an issue which has already been identified by the school in its self-evaluation.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is excellent. This is because the usual broad, balanced curriculum is enhanced in a number of ways. The school has created an imaginative solution to the providing two modern foreign languages alongside additional literacy support. Progress units are used well to improve the basic skills of some students, enabling them to access the wider curriculum. The Enhanced Learning Centre supports and gives confidence to the more vulnerable. There is a very good programme of support for gifted and talented students.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum is well suited to the needs of students and enables them to achieve very high standards. There is a good options system that enables all students to follow their chosen courses of study. The vocational choice offered is growing but is not yet broad enough to match the needs of all students. The sixth form curriculum is again broad and has a good range of subjects, enabling students to achieve very well. Retention on courses and between Years 12 and 13 is very good. School managers are working with other providers to broaden this choice, particularly at levels 1 and 2. The enrichment of the curriculum is exceptional. Teachers give unstintingly of their time to provide formal and informal learning opportunities. There is an extensive range of clubs and many trips to broaden the students' horizons.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of pastoral and personal support provided for students is outstanding. Learning managers know students very well and tutors play a significant role in supporting them from day to day. The students and their parents appreciate this support and the approachability of staff.

Academic guidance is also very strong. Learning managers, curriculum area leaders and senior managers use data carefully to track the progress of all students. Intervention and help always take place at the right level because communication is very good.

Careers advice is very strong and greatly appreciated by students, who feel well prepared for the next phases of education. Links with external agencies are very good, particularly with primary schools, and the support for students joining the school is excellent. Support for pupils with learning disabilities or difficulties is also extremely good

Arrangements to keep students safe meet statutory requirements. Health and safety procedures are very robust and excellent safety practice was observed during the inspection.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The leadership of the school is creative in seeking constant improvement, a particular focus of the skilled, energetic and united senior leadership team. The headteacher's leadership style enables staff to create and manage change which is well matched to the school's priorities. The school development plan is a concise document that clearly identifies short- and longer-term priorities and targets.

Recent restructuring has strengthened middle management. Curriculum area leaders have had a major influence on improving teaching and learning. Learning managers have been enabled to track students' academic and personal progress, whilst maintaining the excellent relationships between adults and students. It is the consistency of approach and of systems that makes leadership and management outstanding. There is no complacency in any aspect of the school's work. Monitoring and evaluation are embedded consistently and the few areas of weaker practice identified have been successfully improved.

Governors are knowledgeable, supportive and experienced. They hold the school effectively to account and are proactive, for example, in the efficient management of new building projects. The management of finances is secure and the school offers



excellent value for money. The school consults pupils and parents frequently and feedback is extremely positive.

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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
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	1	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Your openness in sharing your own experience of the school helped us a great deal in our work and made the day very pleasant indeed.

You will be interested to know what we found on our visit. In our conversations with you we were impressed by your positive attitudes and appreciation of the many excellent opportunities that your school offers. We agree with your view that your school is outstanding. Here are some of the things that we found to be particularly excellent:

- Results are very good indeed across the whole range, from Key Stage 3 tests to A levels. This is particularly true at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science. The proportion of students attaining five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is also exceptionally good, giving so many of you an excellent platform for future success.
- The quality of care shown by staff, for both your personal development and academic guidance is exceptionally good.
- The range of opportunities beyond the classroom is fantastic and so many of you participate in additional sports, arts and a vast range of other activities.
- Those responsible for leading and managing your school are ambitious for your success as learners and developing young adults. They are highly skilled at continuously improving the education that you are offered.
- Students have very positive attitudes and the relationships between everyone who works in the school are very strong.

The headteacher and his staff already know what they intend to do next to improve the school even further, and we agree with his priorities. These include:

- Developing an even broader curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, particularly in terms of a wider range of vocational options.
- Further develop the marking and assessment of your work so that you know what your next steps in learning are in all subjects.

Once again, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable. We wish you and the school every possible success in the future.