



Trinity School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131766
Local Authority Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 293841
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Alastair Younger

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Condercum Road
School category	Community special		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	7–16		NE4 8XJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2261500
Number on roll (school)	136	Fax number	0191 2261226
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Alderman Joan Lamb
		Principal	Mr Dave Edmondson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–16	21–22 November 2006	293841

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a large school for students who have statements of special educational need reflecting their extreme emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Most students come from areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Attainment on entry is often very low. Boys outnumber girls by about six to one. Nearly all students are White British. About 10% of them are looked after by the local authority.

The school operates on three sites in different parts of the city. It is currently undergoing radical reorganisation. Each year, a few students repeat their final year. Their programmes, usually work placed learning, are organised and supervised by the school but the group does not constitute a sixth form.

The three sites are:

- Kenton Lodge for students aged 6-14. Students are frequently especially vulnerable.
- Deneview for students aged 11-16.
- Oakfield for students aged 14-16. It has an adult orientated ethos.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory its performance in a few respects is inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

Trinity has the status of a single school led by a principal. Until recently each of the three sites had different head and deputy headteachers and separate identities. Very recent, well considered, restructuring of the leadership team has helped pave the way for the school to develop a single identity with high calibre senior staff having much clearer lines of responsibility across all three sites. It is too early to judge how effective these changes have been but there are early signs of them being beneficial. This gives the school a satisfactory and growing capacity to improve. The job of improving the school and raising standards is made difficult because there is very little self-evaluation and the monitoring of students' progress is weak. There are many pockets of good practice but monitoring and evaluation by senior staff has yet to bring consistency throughout the school.

The nature of students' difficulties means that most are working well below national expectations, but achievement is satisfactory for those who attend. Most of last year's leavers successfully transferred to college, training or employment having benefited from good work-based experiences in their final two years of school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but progress is very uneven, as many students do not attend frequently enough to benefit from the school's input. Weaknesses in the checking of students' progress make the setting of individual learning targets erratic. Beyond basic skills the academic curriculum is not well enough promoted. This limits students' success in gaining qualifications other than awards for completing short units of study.

Students' circumstances mean they live complicated lives with the considerable involvement of other agencies and support organisations. The school works well in partnership with these to help students cope with their difficulties, keep out of trouble and have brighter futures. Enterprise is well promoted amongst older students who run the school farm and catering businesses. Students who attend say they enjoy coming to school and their parents tend to agree.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the academic progress of every student is more closely monitored to help teachers plan more carefully for what they expect individuals to learn and offer better informed educational support and guidance to learners.
- Base self-evaluation on facts rather than feeling, so that the spectacular success of a few students does not cloud the ordinariness of the progress made by others.
- Address imbalances in the vocational and academic curriculum so that students have equal opportunities to succeed in both.
- Pursue all avenues to improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Because of their circumstances, students are working well below national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory but progress is very uneven. Judgements are made mainly on the evidence of inspection because the school has very little data to demonstrate students' progress. One of the biggest barriers to better achievement is the reluctance of a significant group of students to attend. This prevents them from benefiting from satisfactory, and occasionally good teaching. At Oakfield, the best achievement is in work-related activities where many students get certificates for successfully completing courses with training providers and colleges. There is less success in the classroom because not enough time is spent there. This especially hinders the achievement of more academically able students. Most students gain a good number of awards for short units of study at a very basic level but only a small minority achieve success in gaining more demanding qualifications such as Entry Level or Basic Skills accreditation. At Deneview, achievement is satisfactory in English and mathematics but students make little progress in most other subjects because they are not studied in enough depth. At Kenton Lodge, achievement is satisfactory over a wider range of subjects and a few students are making good progress in numeracy and literacy. There is no evidence to suggest that girls' achievement is any different to that of boys or that students in care achieve differently to those who are not.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Almost a quarter of school time is lost through absence, less at Kenton Lodge where attendance is satisfactory. Many students exhibit extreme behaviour at times of personal crisis but it is usually well managed and all the sites were very settled during the inspection. Deneview has successfully emerged from a period of extreme disruption. Records at Kenton Lodge show the frequency of serious incidents is falling. This is making the school a happier, safer place. Formal exclusion is uncommon. The work skills that older students pick up contribute well to their future economic well-being but prospects are limited by lesser success in developing their basic skills in numeracy and literacy. The catering enterprise at Oakfield contributes particularly well to the school community and is successfully extending beyond the school. On other sites contribution to the community is through the satisfactory manner in which students learn how to be more socially aware and responsible. Students learn about the most important aspects of personal care and living healthy lifestyles but do not always put what they learn into practice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school's monitoring points to it varying from 'good with some outstanding features' to 'satisfactory with some inadequate features'. This tallies with the evidence of inspection. The quality of teaching is broadly similar on all three sites but at Kenton Lodge particularly good progress has been made in using individual education plans, to plan work ideally suited to the needs of different students, and checking on their progress. This is a weakness in much of the teaching on other sites. The formation of good, trusting relationships lies at the heart of teaching. Most students have experienced little but failure in other schools and developed a deep distrust of teachers. At Trinity, teachers go a long way to removing this barrier to learning. Teachers also have a good awareness of the signs of growing frustration and impending crisis. This often helps them to avert classroom disruption and allows learning to continue smoothly. Time is not always best used. A few teachers have a tendency to allow learning to lapse into recreation because they misjudge the balance between effort and reward.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The strengths of the vocational curriculum balance weaknesses in the school's delivery of the National Curriculum. In this respect, older students are getting a better deal than the younger ones. Work-based learning is well developed. The school has established fruitful partnerships with many training providers and Oakfield, in particular, provides good opportunities for students to secure positive futures in adult life by giving students good access to the reality of working for a living. At Deneview, older students, especially girls share these opportunities. The National Curriculum is less well served at Deneview, where students do not have enough opportunities to achieve success in subjects other than English and mathematics because not enough time is dedicated to them. The balance is better at Kenton Lodge and the result can be seen in better attendance and more enjoyment of learning. Many students at Oakfield could achieve more if a better balance was maintained between the vocational and academic curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Strengths in the pastoral care and safeguarding of students compensate for weaknesses in educational support and guidance. The lifestyles of many students make them very vulnerable to the negative influences of society. Trinity is effective in helping to minimise the threat of personal risk. Students are never knowingly put into positions they cannot cope with. They are well supported through good working arrangements with many other agencies.

Educational support and guidance are limited by a lack of rigour in checking students' progress. There is no school system to facilitate this but a good start has been made at Kenton Lodge and this would serve as a good blueprint for the rest of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The school has had a hard few years of unsettled leadership but recent restructuring of the leadership team bears the hallmarks of good judgement in appointing key personnel and a clear view of what is needed to bring about improvement. The very recently approved plan to replace three headteachers with heads of education and care, sharing responsibilities across all three sites, is a very positive move towards unification. It allows for better sharing of expertise and resources. This reorganisation has also brought the benefit of turning a potentially large deficit into the budget into a welcomed surplus, thus providing better value for money. The lack of self-evaluation based on fact, rather than emotion, has led the school to feel it is better than it actually is. It has led to too much comfort being gained from individual students' success and not enough analysis of the reasons for other students' lack of it. Following the previous inspection the school encountered many problems and a traumatic breakdown in discipline on one site. These problems have been largely overcome through good management decisions and the school is once more improving. A new generation of leaders is now in a position to bring the school up to date, redress imbalances in the curriculum, evaluate effectiveness more systematically and improve academic achievement.

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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Trinity School
Condercum Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE4 8XJ
23 November 2006

Dear Students

There are good things about your school and there are things that could be better.

What I liked was that a lot of people are working well together to help you. I also feel that you older students are getting a good idea of what life is going to be like when you finally leave school. The bacon butty was magnificent. All credit to your catering enterprise.

I was less sure about how you were getting on in the classroom. There seems to be a lot of English and mathematics but I've got a feeling that many of you would like to show what you could do in other subjects. I'm sure that a lot of you don't know how well you are getting on. I've asked teachers to look into this. I think that if your timetables were a bit more interesting and you had the chance to prove what you could do in other subjects you might turn up more often. Each day last year about a quarter of you didn't arrive. That's not good enough. There's a good chance that if you're not in school you may be up to no good or you are bored at home.

Give it a go and turn up for school.

Alastair Younger
(Lead inspector)