

Tottington High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105357
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	301982
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	943
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jack Kenneford
Headteacher	Mr A Scott
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Laurel Street Tottington Bury Lancashire BL8 3LY
Telephone number	01204 882327
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school draws students from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which includes pockets of deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is lower than average. Most students are of White British heritage. Standards upon entry are broadly average, although the proportion of students with a statement of educational need is almost twice the national average. The school gained specialist status in mathematics and computing in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tottington High School is a good school. Learners reach standards that are above average and make good overall progress. Vulnerable students achieve well and the personal development of students is good. Relationships in school are very positive and students enjoy coming to school. Effective induction arrangements help new students to settle in quickly. A strong programme of personal, social, health and careers education contributes to students' good moral and social development, and encourages many of them to serve the school community through membership of the school council and by acting as anti-bullying mentors. Students support the wider community through fundraising for charity and musical performances. The school fosters students' good spiritual and cultural development through its rich provision in the arts and a wide range of visits abroad.

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of teaching, the majority of which is good, with generally well structured lessons which show good pace and engage learners. Most students receive helpful feedback on their current levels and grades, but there is scope in some subjects to give them more information on exactly how to improve their work. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of learners effectively. The school offers a wide range of options at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses, and it has firm plans to expand the range of fast track and other courses for more able students. Students are well cared for and supported in school. They receive secure guidance from their teachers and external advisers about options for further study and careers. The quality of such guidance and effective arrangements for transition are reflected in the higher than average proportion of students who progress to further education, employment and training after leaving school. Parents feel well informed by the school about their children's progress. However, strategies to ensure consistent and effective use of the information obtained from tracking students' progress are not yet fully in place.

The school is well led and managed, and has successfully tackled all of the key issues for improvement from the last inspection. The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing has been astutely used to improve provision and raise achievement. This, together with the good quality of leadership and management at all levels, demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that effective recent initiatives are securely and consistently embedded across the whole school.
- Ensure that new arrangements to track the academic and the personal progress of all students are effectively communicated to relevant staff.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school with broadly average standards, and a higher than average proportion has statements of special educational need. By the time they leave, students reach above average standards. This represents good achievement.

In the Year 9 national tests in 2006, students reached standards which were above average in mathematics and science, and the school's challenging targets were exceeded in these subjects. There was a slight dip in standards in English compared to 2005 and challenging targets in

English were narrowly missed. Nonetheless, standards remained broadly average. This represents good achievement in mathematics and science and satisfactory achievement in English.

Standards at the end of Year 11 in 2006 were above average. The proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2006 was higher than average, although the school's target was narrowly missed. The proportion of students who gained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics was also above average and all students left school with a recognised qualification. This represents good achievement. Students achieved particularly well in English, mathematics, combined science, history, art, drama and music, although achievement was weaker in French.

The school took rapid and vigorous action to identify and address the causes of variations in achievement last year. This included much sharper use of assessment information to identify underachieving students and subjects earlier, and offer very focused programmes of support. The positive impact of these interventions is seen in the good achievement of Year 9 students in this year's Key Stage 3 national tests in mathematics and science. In English too, most Key Stage 3 students now make good progress against their targets. Inspection evidence also shows that this year's students entered for their GCSE and other examinations are on target to meet their expected grades. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at both key stages continue to achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. One parent said: 'The school raises the confidence and self-esteem of our sons and daughters and pupil-teacher relationships are very good.' Students are proud of their school and demonstrate their enjoyment of all it offers by their consistently above average attendance. They behave well in lessons and around the school and show consideration for their classmates. The school council has a high profile and takes a lead in suggesting how the school could improve further. For example, with governors, they are currently renovating the greenhouse in order to grow plants to raise money for the wide range of charities supported by pupils. The comprehensive personal, social, health and careers programme ensures that students are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet, but they do not always put their learning into practice in their everyday meal choices. Nonetheless, students enjoy keeping healthy by taking an active part in the extensive range of sporting activities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the regular music and drama productions receive critical acclaim from parents and from the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and enables learners of all abilities to make good progress. Students say they like their lessons because most teachers arrange a good variety of enjoyable tasks. Well-planned work in groups and pairs effectively encourages students to take an active part in lessons. The school's specialist status is helping to give students frequent opportunities to apply and improve their computing skills in all subjects. Probing use of questions draws out well reasoned explanations from students and supports their good progress in speaking skills. Teachers in the most successful subjects, such as art, set the highest

expectations of students. They have good knowledge of their subjects which, when combined with the students' positive attitudes, helps to secure good progress.

There are pockets where teaching is only satisfactory. Occasionally teachers talk for too long and do not give the students enough opportunity to demonstrate what they have learnt. In these lessons students tend to be less engaged and less motivated. Learning objectives sometimes lack precision and teachers do not use the objectives effectively to guide or review learning. The use of assessment to help students reach their expected targets is effective in some subjects, for example in history, but not securely in place across the school. Much marking is helpful and specifically points out strengths and weaknesses, but some is bland and fails to give enough guidance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good range of courses and activities that the students enjoy. Provision in the arts is especially strong and leads to good results, boosting the students' self-esteem and pride in their work. The good range of extra-curricular activities is popular with students and also supports their personal development well. The extensive programme for personal, social, health and careers education makes a good contribution to the students' understanding of health-related issues. The good choice of optional subjects at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses, helps the great majority of students to move on successfully to the next stage of their education, training or employment. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their curriculum carefully tailored to match their needs and aptitudes. Work-related education is strong, with events in each year group. Provision for the development of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is also good, reflecting the school's specialist status. The school runs an early entry GCSE course in mathematics leading to an AS level course in Year 11 and has firm plans to expand its range of such fast track provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school has good procedures to promote and safeguard students' welfare. Teachers know students well and procedures to ensure health and safety, including those for child protection, are in place so that students feel safe and secure in school.

Links with outside agencies are good. Support from teaching assistants and through well targeted interventions is sensitive, well coordinated, and very effective in promoting the well-being and academic progress of all students, including the most vulnerable. As a result, all students with additional needs make good progress.

Induction arrangements for new students are good. Students are particularly pleased with the support offered by other students; for example, as peer mentors, prefects and the Year 11 students who run the bullying support room. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and appreciate the 'positive referral' letters which celebrate a wide range of achievements.

Rigorous systems for setting targets help students achieve their potential. Students know their targets and how well they are doing, but are not as confident about how to improve. Individual student work and behaviour is tracked by form tutors and heads of year. This new arrangement

is at an early stage of development. 'Learning conversations' involve parents in ongoing monitoring of students' progress and voluntary learning mentors provide good support. However, strategies to ensure consistent and effective use of the information obtained from tracking students' progress are not yet fully in place.

There are effective arrangements for option choices in Year 9. Careers information and work-related knowledge, skills and experiences are developed well through work experience, personal and social education and support from Connexions. As a result, students are able to make well informed decisions about further education or training after leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and leaders at all levels provide a strong focus on raising achievement. Self-evaluation is good, with coherent systems that give leaders and managers a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school's development planning is rigorous and collaborative. However, there is some inconsistency across departments in setting themselves measurable targets for improvement. Robust systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and a focus on assessment have contributed to the improved quality of teaching and learning. This, along with the school's specialist status in mathematics and computing, has led to particularly good achievement not only in mathematics but across the curriculum. This is because specialist status has brought improved facilities for ICT. Recent interventions to tackle underachievement in English at Key Stage 3 and other pockets of underperformance have shown a good impact on the progress of current students in the school at both key stages. These improvements now need to be securely established across the whole school.

The school makes generally effective use of assessment information to track students' progress. However, more effective communication needs to be established between recently introduced systems for tracking the academic and pastoral progress of all students.

The school has harnessed its specialist status to enhance facilities for ICT and foster effective partnerships with local primary schools and community links that have enriched the curriculum. Governors know the school well and provide a very effective challenge to the school when necessary. The school offers good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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	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.

Annex A

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

Following the inspection of your school, I would like to tell you about the results of the inspection. Tottington High School provides a good education for you, so that you reach above average standards in your work and make good progress. You all develop into confident and considerate young people who enjoy taking responsibility for others, for example as peer mentors, as members of the School Council, or through the wide range of your charity work.

We thought that your relationships with your teachers and with each other were very positive. It was pleasing to hear how much the good variety of sports and arts activities, as well as visits abroad, that the school offers you, help you to enjoy school so much.

The school has been working hard to improve the quality of teaching that you receive and most of your lessons are good and encourage you to take an active part in your learning. We were pleased to see that most teachers help you to understand how well you are doing, but sometimes you are not sure how to improve your work and reach the next level or grade. It is good that you have plenty of GCSE and other courses to choose from, including some vocational subjects, and the school knows that it is important to widen the variety of subjects even more.

The inspection team was pleased to find that you can always obtain good advice when you need it, on personal problems as well as about options for further study and careers. This is partly why such a large number of you go on to further education, employment and training when you leave school.

The school has made a lot of improvements since the last inspection. Becoming a specialist mathematics and computing college has helped many of you to achieve well in mathematics and science. There are also better facilities for information and communication technology, so that more of your teachers now use it themselves and plan more opportunities for you to use it in lessons. We think that the school can improve still more and that it should:

- make sure that when something new is introduced, the headteacher and the senior teachers check that it is working well across the whole school
- make sure that everyone who needs to know how well you are getting on, both personally and with your work, gets the right information about you to be able to help you.

I would like to thank those of you who talked to me and my colleagues to let us know what you think of the school. We found this very helpful. I would also like to wish you all every success for your future at Tottington High School.