

Turves Green Girls' School and Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103499
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	302347
Inspection dates	3–4 May 2007
Reporting inspector	John Mason

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	Girls
Number on roll	
School	748
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Les Lawrence
Headteacher	Sara Brehony
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Turves Green Northfield Birmingham B31 4BP
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Turves Green Girls' School and Technology College is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving the Northfield, Longbridge and Kings Norton areas of Birmingham. Pupils come from a range of circumstances, many with social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average whilst the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Very few pupils do not have English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, although fewer than average have statements of needs. The school became a technology college in 1997 and is involved in a wide range of initiatives to raise standards. It has achieved Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards. It also offers supplementary provision for family and community learning and is involved in Excellence in Cities, a project to support improvements across groups of city schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Turves Green Girls' School and Technology College is a good school with several outstanding elements. There is a strong and supportive sense of community in the school and pupils are keen to do well, taking pride in their work.

The experienced and very highly regarded headteacher is ably supported by a good senior management team, capable middle managers and committed, knowledgeable governors. She also takes a prominent role in a wide range of collaborative partnerships with other schools which have a strong impact on both the school and the wider community. The school benefits from extensive further opportunities for the pupils, staff and parents to develop and realise their aspirations.

The school evaluates its own performance well. It has accurately identified areas for improvement and taken very effective action in implementing these. It recognises the changing needs of pupils, both academically and socially, addressing these well within a limited budget and the constraints of the buildings. The school is well led and managed.

Standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are above average. Pupils' achievement is good. The school strives hard to raise and maintain standards by setting challenging goals. It plans highly effective, targeted provision to prepare for examinations. In the Year 9 SATs preparation week, for example, pupils are very engaged due to carefully focused teaching which ensures they enter the tests with the confidence and expertise to do well. Good teaching engages pupils well because teachers use a good variety of techniques which promote enjoyment in learning. In a very few lessons, however, marking and assessment practices do not support learning as rigorously as they could and tasks do not consistently match pupils' needs. Too often pupils do not understand sufficiently well the targets they have been given and what it is they need to do to improve.

The curriculum is good. Technology College status, now in its tenth year, continues to be an excellent engine to drive important initiatives. Results in design and technology, engineering and information and communication technology (ICT) are consistently above average. The range of technology-related courses in Years 10 and 11 is very wide, including a good range of vocational courses. Cross-curricular links are well established, as is support for technology in primary schools. The integrated enterprise curriculum provides outstanding opportunities for girls to develop work-related learning. However, only one modern foreign language is offered and some girls do not have two hours of physical exercise in Years 10 and 11.

The level of care, guidance and support is good. The pastoral care is very well coordinated and the involvement of pupils in caring for each other is excellent. Pupils make outstanding progress socially, 'blossoming' as one pupil said. Relationships are harmonious. The attitudes and behaviour of the vast majority are very good. The very successful family learning centre motivates parents and their children to engage in education. It also offers courses and advice on a range of social issues. Despite a small minority of disaffected girls, the personal development and well-being of pupils is good.

Since the previous inspection, the school has made good progress, improving its curriculum, the quality of care for its pupils and investing in training which has strengthened the management of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop greater consistency in assessment practice, ensuring targets are fully understood and in matching tasks in lessons to the individual ability of pupils.
- Improve provision and pupils' participation in learning modern foreign languages and in physical education (PE) in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Despite some inconsistency since the previous inspection, recent trends show that declining achievement in Years 7 to 9 has been impressively reversed. There has been outstanding improvement across all core subjects, most particularly in English. The 2006 SATs results were significantly above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining five A*-C grades, including English and mathematics, is above average and progress in the current Year 11 confirms inspectors' views that standards are now securely above average. The school has met and in many cases exceeded the challenging targets it sets as a technology college. Results in the technologies, humanities, art and media are consistently above national averages. No subjects significantly under perform. The school has effectively tackled any variation in performance of minority ethnic pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their social awareness is outstanding. The overwhelming majority have a well developed sense of the worth and needs of others. In class, they usually work well in collaboration with one another and cope responsibly with the issues raised when a very few misbehave. Almost all enjoy lessons. They are very enthusiastic about the wide range of additional activities in which they participate. They are proud of their many and varied charitable fund-raising and enterprise activities, such as the setting up of a Young Enterprise initiative in South Africa. They contribute well to the school through initiatives such as the Junior Sports Leadership scheme and in the ways in which older pupils help the younger. The school council plays a mature part in discussing school issues, having its own budget for minor projects and influence over the appointment of teachers. Many activities, in the arts, for example, reach out to the local community. Attendance is average. The good attendance of the majority is pulled down by the persistent non-attendance of a small group of disaffected pupils. Unauthorised absence has fallen due to the impact of the school's efficient monitoring arrangements. The rate of exclusion is low. Pupils enjoy good relationships with teachers and with one another. They feel safe in school, with little bullying or racial intimidation. When incidents do occur, the system of mentors, aunties and counsellors provides them with support. Pupils are confident about confiding in form tutors and teachers. Pupils learn very well the skills that they will need in the world of work, especially in enterprise-related activities and in those lessons where they are encouraged to develop independence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school is making effective use of expertise among its own staff. Collaboration with other schools develops teaching still further. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed. Relationships are good. Pupils behave well and show a desire to learn. Teachers check pupils' progress during the lessons and, by involving pupils in their own assessment, help them to see how they can improve. Written comments, however, do not always show pupils clearly how to improve further. Pupils enjoy their teachers' use of a range of different kinds of activities, often 'fun' ones, within a lesson. The very best teaching, brisk and enthusiastic, with high expectations and work which matches the capabilities of the pupils, captivates and motivates. In such lessons, the marking is detailed, showing pupils clearly how to improve. In the very few overall satisfactory lessons, there are some weaknesses. Here, the work does not take account of the full range of abilities within the class and lessons are almost entirely led by the teacher, giving pupils little opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. Literacy targets lack impact for some pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets the needs of its pupils well. There is a wide range of courses for pupils of all abilities in Years 10 and 11 and all take at least one technology course. The school's specialist status has had a significant impact on the curriculum, enabling the school to expand the range of technology and vocational courses. The most able pupils in Year 9 have the opportunity to extend their curriculum by taking GCSE statistics. The school has excellent links with schools in China and in South Africa. Pupils are prepared outstandingly well for the world of work through ICT, work experience, enterprise days, and links with local businesses. The curriculum is enriched with an excellent range of clubs, visits and speakers. Weaknesses in the curriculum are the lack of choice of modern foreign languages, and the low amount of time for core physical education in Years 10 and 11.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with good quality care, guidance and support, including some excellent practice based on regular discussion and communication by all involved in the processes. High priority is given to pupils with social learning and behavioural problems. Specialist staff, such as the behaviour manager and school nurse, collaborate effectively with teachers at all levels in the pastoral team to identify and deal with issues affecting pupils' well-being. Pupils at risk are therefore identified early. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well met, although recent rising numbers have stretched the resources of the well trained support staff. The school works well in partnership with a range of agencies and specialists to help these pupils and to monitor their progress. Pupils speak enthusiastically in praise of the system of care that involves their peers in providing them with support and advice. Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of all pupils are exemplary. The school takes the views of parents and pupils into consideration through regular consultation over pupils' experiences in lessons and around the school, for example, using a questionnaire on bullying when determining their future course of action. While much guidance to pupils about their

work is of high quality, many pupils do not fully understand the targets they have been given, and are therefore unsure about how they can best improve. When girls take PE in the joint sports facility with the Boys' School, they do not always have the opportunity to shower afterwards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has ensured that the strengths of the school, such as the very good provision within design and technology including high quality engineering courses, have been maintained and developed. The vision that girls can have a role in society and employment pervades the ethos of the school. The headteacher is well supported by a good senior staff. The responsibilities of the senior leadership team are clearly defined. They give clear direction to others in the school. The school evaluates itself well, for example, it has acted to improve music provision and, more recently, science. Overall, pupils achieve well during their time in school and staff training has improved teaching and learning. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as improving and extending ICT resources, have rightly been identified as recent areas for development. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and challenge appropriately where necessary.

The school communicates and listens to parents well, enhanced by questionnaires and a regular newsletter. It plays a leading role in collaboration with other schools and institutions, such as in the local initiatives for 14 to 19 year olds. Links with the community and feeder primaries are excellent, as a result of the extended school provision, specialist school status and working together with other schools. The school has good capacity to continue to improve.

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Annex A

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?	1
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	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Turves Green Girls' School and Technology College, Turves Green, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 4BP

I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you, talking with you and seeing your involvement in the activities of your school. We also received many responses to our questionnaire for parents. Please pass on our thanks to them for their replies.

We believe you are getting a good education. You do well in examinations because you receive good teaching and because special programmes, such as the Year 9 SATs preparation week, help you to feel confident that you can do well. Most of you enjoy your education very much and behave well, wanting to learn. You like especially the ways in which you can help one another and participate in activities which develop friendships and self-confidence. A very small number of pupils miss out on these opportunities by being frequently absent and very few can sometimes be distracting in class. However, both you and your teachers manage these issues very well.

You have good opportunities to learn in the school. The school is one of the longest established technology colleges in the country. The many activities it provides have become part and parcel of the school. Your results and teaching in technology subjects are always particularly good. The school's work with other schools and organisations brings many benefits, including excellent opportunities for you to plan for your choices when you leave school.

The school cares well for your needs. Your headteacher is extremely dedicated to providing the best for you and her team leads and manages the school well. We are asking the school to look at the ways some aspects of teaching could be improved further so that learning is at its best in all lessons. This includes providing greater opportunities for you in modern foreign languages and, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, in PE.

The inspectors are sure that you will want to play your part in developing the school further and we wish you every success in your promising futures.

Yours sincerely

John Mason Lead Inspector