

# Trentham High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124388
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	316500
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Dowgill

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	623
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jane Woodroffe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Chesterton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Allerton Road Trentham Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8PQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234534
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 234537

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Trentham High School is smaller than the average secondary school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average.

When Trentham High School was inspected in March 2006, it was judged to require special measures. A new headteacher was appointed soon after the previous inspection. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant turnover of teaching staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Trentham High is a rapidly improving school that provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The key to the school's improvement has been the headteacher's outstanding leadership. She is involved in all aspects of the school's life. Her impact is summarised very well by one pupil who said, 'The head is seen around school, she gets involved and has improved it so much.' A key strength of this leadership has been her ability to transform the ethos of the school and take all members of the school community with her on the journey of improvement. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to develop both senior and middle leaders and this is beginning to pay dividends in the impact they are having on school improvement. All staff are working well as a team with the common purpose of doing their best for the pupils. As a result, the school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

The school has had to tackle a legacy of underachievement and weak teaching. Senior leaders made it a priority to improve teaching and learning and have provided considerable opportunities for teachers' professional development. This is beginning to have an impact with improving results at GCSE and in Year 9. At GCSE, there has been a good improvement in girls' performance, but that of boys remains below average. The standards pupils attain overall are broadly average and not enough pupils are attaining the higher grades. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school knows that these results are not good enough and has set pupils in all years challenging targets which, if achieved, will result in a significant improvement in standards. Teaching is now engaging pupils much more in their learning and they are beginning to make good progress in lessons. However, not all teachers ensure that there is effective consolidation of pupils' learning in both lessons and homework, so that all pupils have a secure base from which to build towards their targets. Teachers do not consistently make good use of marking to ensure pupils are aware of the standard of their work and how it could be improved. The school has recently developed the curriculum to make it more relevant to pupils' needs.

The school works well with a broad, and increasing, range of external partners to support pupils in a variety of areas. Within the school, academic and behaviour managers along with form tutors are effectively meeting the needs of pupils. The improved provision for care and support has resulted in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Pupils are enjoying school and are becoming more involved in the opportunities presented to them in school. More pupils are taking up extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, and this contributes to their good understanding of the need to lead healthy lives. They behave well in lessons and around the school and show respect for others. Their contribution to the wider community is satisfactory. They are developing the skills needed for their future economic well-being.

Links with parents have improved considerably and there is regular communication from the school informing them about its work. There are also effective and regular opportunities for parents to present their views to the school. They have an increasingly positive outlook on its work.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' performance at GCSE by ensuring they achieve their target grades.

- Ensure teachers consolidate pupils' learning more effectively in lessons and through homework so that they are in a stronger position to meet their targets.
- Ensure marking is used consistently well across the school to provide pupils with a clear picture of both the standard of their work and what they need to do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' performance in GCSE in 2007 was an improvement on the previous year. The percentage gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades was below average but, when English and mathematics are included, the figure is in line with national expectations. Although girls performed considerably better than boys, too few pupils attained the higher GCSE grades. Given their starting points, the progress of this year group between Year 7 and 9 was inadequate. Due to the action taken by the school to support these pupils, they made up considerable ground during Years 10 and 11 and their progress was satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers because of the support provided. Most of the current Year 11 pupils are on track to meet their targets.

The overall results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2007 were the second highest the school has achieved in the recent past, and were broadly in line with national average. The attainment on entry to the school of these pupils was in line with the national average and they made satisfactory progress. Pupils' performance was strong in mathematics, but too few attained the higher levels in English and science.

In lessons across the school, most pupils make good progress in their understanding of the subject content but their written work indicates that, over time, their progress is only satisfactory.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils now enjoy school much more than in the recent past and this is reflected in their positive engagement in lessons and improved behaviour. They appreciate that the school is making great efforts to support and challenge them and welcome this. They now feel a stronger sense of community and belonging to the school and are beginning to make a greater contribution through, for example, their involvement in various leadership roles, such as prefects. Pupils appreciate the increasing range of opportunities provided to become more involved in school life. Although the school council does not yet give them an effective voice, they believe the school does listen to their views. Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average.

Pupils are articulate and polite and show respect for other pupils and adults. Their social and moral development is good. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and act sensibly when moving around school and in social areas. They feel confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively and know who to speak to if they have any concerns. Pupils understand what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and appreciate the changes to the lunchtime menu to include more healthy options. The take up of extra-curricular sport activities is good and contributes effectively to their well-being. Pupils work well together and are confident in

expressing their ideas, and this helps to prepare them well for their next steps after leaving school. However, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are not as strong as they could be.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

There have been considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Teachers now have a better understanding of what pupils are capable of and staff expectations are rising. There is more good teaching and the impact of this can be seen in the improving standards. The teachers' work with learning support assistants is a particular strength and ensures that those pupils who need specific help in lessons receive it. However, there is not yet enough consistently good teaching to ensure that all pupils are able to make good progress over time.

Most teachers plan clear learning goals that they share with the pupils, although too often these are not sufficiently challenging for the more able. Teachers are now confidently using a wider range of teaching strategies and this is generating enthusiasm for, and enjoyment of, learning amongst pupils. There remain too few planned opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. The consolidation of pupils' learning by teachers is inconsistent. Teachers set homework, but the quality varies too much and there is a lack of consistency in how often it is set. The marking of pupils' written work often provides too little information about its quality or enough guidance about how it could be improved.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The well planned curriculum provides a broad range of experiences for pupils and it satisfactorily meets their needs. The school has recently introduced a number of improvements to the curriculum and these are emerging as strengths. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact of these changes on pupil outcomes. New courses in Year 10 are providing pupils with a vocational dimension to their learning. Coupled with work related learning experiences, these features are beginning to provide greater relevance and a more practical dimension to learning. The school is further enhancing the curriculum by using external contacts, such as engineers, health workers and an artist in residence. However, the focus on planning at the subject level to support the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is inconsistent.

An increasing number of pupils are making good use of the broadening range of extra-curricular activities, particular those that are sport related. The support provided for pupils in transferring to their next stage of learning, through recently established links with local colleges and universities, is good and is helping to raise expectations.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The pupils are looked after and cared for well. The school has developed effective links with an increasing number of outside agencies and organisations resulting in good support for pupils experiencing difficulties. The school has appropriate systems in place to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. The recent change to mixed year tutor groups, along with the new behaviour policy

and the work of the behaviour managers, is having a positive impact. This is evident in improved relationships between year groups and pupils' good behaviour. Pupils report that the school is now a much friendlier place and value the system of rewards and sanctions.

Senior leaders have introduced a robust system for setting individual subject targets for every pupil and formally assessing and tracking their progress towards achieving them. As a result, teachers and pupils know the minimum expected targets and the staff receive information each half term about pupils' performance. The recently introduced academic managers have a good oversight of the overall academic performance of the pupils under their care and make timely interventions when they identify underachievement. Subject staff are now working more closely with the academic managers to ensure pupils remain on track.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Under the guidance of the excellent leadership of the headteacher, senior and middle leaders are driving forward improvement at a good pace. Pupils are aware of this development and appreciate the changes that have been made. There are comprehensive systems in place to monitor the school's work, the outcomes of which have been used well in the school's good self-evaluation. Senior leaders have a clear picture of the school's strengths and weakness and are using this information to target intervention and support appropriately. Leaders and managers at all levels are increasingly being held accountable for pupils' performance and they are relishing the challenge this presents. Monitoring and evaluation now involves middle managers. Practice is variable amongst these managers as some are still developing the skills necessary to ensure the consistent application of procedures in their areas of responsibility.

The school deploys resources effectively and efficiently. Leaders have had to tackle declining pupil numbers and, in doing so, have successfully minimised the impact of this change on pupils' learning. The school has improved the pupils' social and learning environment considerably and this has had a beneficial impact on their behaviour and social development.

The governing body is better informed about the school's performance and is now providing both support and challenge. It is committed to further ensuring the school's improvement.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	2

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Trentham High School, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8PQ

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your positive contribution during the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. This letter is to inform you of what we found.

We judged that your school now provides you with a satisfactory standard of education and no longer needs special measures. Trentham is a rapidly improving school and much of this improvement is due to the excellent leadership of the headteacher with good support from other leaders and managers. The teaching in the school is improving and this is leading to better Year 9 test and GCSE examination results, although these are not yet high enough. The school has set you all challenging targets and we were impressed by how well you knew these. You can play your part in improving the school by working hard to meet your targets. The school is changing the curriculum to make subjects more relevant and give you more choice.

Your personal development and well-being are good. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school was good and you demonstrated respect not just for adults but also your peers. Many of you are becoming more involved in the broad range of opportunities provided by the school and are taking on more responsibilities. The care and support provided by the staff is good. One of your peers summed up many of your views when saying, 'I am happy in school, the teachers' listen.'

- The senior leaders, your teachers and the governors are committed to further improving the school. The three ways we suggest they can do this are by: ?
- improving boys' performance at GCSE to enable them to achieve their target grades ?
- asking teachers to reinforce your learning more effectively in lessons and through homework ?
- ensuring that the marking of your work consistently provides you with a clear picture of both its quality and what you have to do to improve it.

We wish you the best of luck in the future. Yours sincerely

Paul Dowgill Lead inspector