

Trinity School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131790
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	319556
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	846
6th form	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Alison Paton
Headteacher	Ms Deborah Forster
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
School address	Love Lane Shaw Newbury RG14 2DU
Telephone number	01635 510500
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Trinity is an average-sized comprehensive school which opened in 1999, following the closure of two smaller schools. A small number of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is above average and some students are taught in a specialist unit. The proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school has specialist status in performing arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Trinity is an improving school and is now providing a standard of education that is satisfactory with many good features. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Leaders and managers at all levels have worked tirelessly to address the issues for improvement raised at the last inspection. In particular, the headteacher and her senior leadership team have instilled a culture of reflection and common purpose amongst the staff. This has helped to raise achievement so that it is now satisfactory. Students enter school with standards that are below average and leave in Year 11 with standards that are still below average, but which have improved significantly in mathematics and science.

Parents recognise that there have been improvements. Typical comments are 'The school has made a big effort to improve the science and maths departments'; 'I can honestly say that we could not have hoped for a happier environment'. Throughout the school, students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are confident, enjoy school, have good relationships with teachers, and work well together in class. They have a good understanding of the importance of being healthy; they feel safe, and know that their opinions and views are valued. Attendance is satisfactory, although a few students are persistently absent. Students receive good care, guidance and support. They know their targets and how to improve their work. However, the aspirations of many students could be higher if the targets they are set were more challenging.

Students too are very aware of changes for the better. They welcome the 'Passport system' and say that this has improved behaviour. Behaviour overall is satisfactory. While the behaviour of most students is good, the poor behaviour of a small minority lets the school down and it sometimes hinders the progress of others. The quality of teaching and learning has improved, resulting in improved achievement. The school accurately monitors the quality of teaching and learning which is satisfactory overall. The proportion of lessons that are good or better has increased, but a minority of lessons are still inadequate. This is because there is not a sharp enough focus on managing and engaging all students, resulting in lost opportunities for learning.

The curriculum is good. Specialist performing arts targets have been met in most areas and are being renegotiated in others. The specialist status has made a positive impact on students' confidence. However, it is not having the same impact on academic achievement because the performing arts are not well established across the curriculum. Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are challenging the school to make rapid improvement. The rate of current improvements indicates that the school has a good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards in 2007, while being average overall, varied considerably. In some subjects at A-level, for example, biology and information communication technology, standards were below average, but above average in geography, history, mathematics, media studies and sociology. The improvements in 2007 indicate that there is now a rising trend and that the school has reversed the fall in standards which occurred in 2006. Overall, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. Those with the

potential to achieve highly did particularly well. Students' personal development is good and they speak highly of the support they receive. Whilst the sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall, it does not provide a range of vocational courses. The school is planning to extend the range of options available. Academic guidance is good and students are well prepared to enter higher education. Guidance in matching students' abilities and aptitudes to courses has improved and fewer students now embark on post-16 courses for which they are not suited. Teaching is good, but students do not have sufficient opportunities for supported self-learning. Attendance is good and monitored well. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good and the issue of self-supported study is being addressed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the aspirations of all students, with a focus on setting targets that are more challenging, mirroring the best practice.
- Ensure teaching and learning are consistently good, with a clear focus on managing and engaging all students.
- Raise the profile of the specialist school status.

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 before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students make satisfactory progress during their time in school, and this includes students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. Attainment on entry to the school is below average and has been so for a number of years. Students make good progress during Years 7, 8 and 9 and by the end of Year 9 standards overall are in line with those seen nationally. Compared to standards in English and science, standards in mathematics are not as strong. However, there has been considerable improvement seen in mathematics over the past eighteen months. Although standards at the end of Year 11 are still below average, they have improved in many areas. Pupils are now building more effectively on the good progress they make in Years 7, 8 and 9. Progress in Years 10 and 11 has improved considerably in mathematics and science and progress in English and humanities is good. Girls are now achieving as well as boys, notably in mathematics where previously they had been less successful. Overall achievement at the end of Year 11 is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students enjoy school and the opportunities it provides. They feel safe from bullying and the majority of students behave considerately towards their peers and staff. They are confident to talk to staff and peer-mentors about their problems. One student said, 'Teachers are friendly and helpful.' Students develop good confidence and self esteem because of the ethos of care and the good range of support for social and emotional development. Behaviour is satisfactory. Most students behave well in lessons and around school. A few students, most of whom enter school with below average social and learning skills, can be disruptive in lessons where they

are not sufficiently engaged and motivated. Attendance is satisfactory. The school has recently put in place good procedures which have not yet had a chance to improve attendance. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They take on responsibilities well, for example, through the recently re-launched school council, fund-raising activities for charities and through environmental projects. They develop sound skills and qualities for economic well-being through careers, work experience and enterprise days. Students act safely. They have a good understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle and many participate in the good range of after-school clubs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Close monitoring by the senior management team, supported by specialist advisers, has led to a clear improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection. In particular, there has been a significant reduction in the number of unsatisfactory lessons. More lessons are now good or better. A few are outstanding, notably in humanities and media studies. A common factor in these best lessons is teachers' clear explanation of objectives, followed by discussion and incisive questioning that enables students to understand how well they have achieved them. Rigorous marking of students' work also helps them to recognise what they need to do to improve and reach their targets. At its best, teaching motivates students by linking work in lessons to their past experiences. For example, a history lesson began by helping Year 7 students to evaluate how hard they work and then compared this with the rigours of life as a Roman soldier. Despite these improvements, inconsistencies remain within and across subjects. Some teachers do not always match the work well enough to the needs of all learners or give them enough time to assess and reflect on their progress. Students speak enthusiastically of the very good relationships that they establish with teachers. This enables most teachers to manage classes well, but students also recognise that there are still times when a few students disrupt the learning of others. Teachers often plan a range of interesting activities that motivate and interest students. However, few use computer projection or interactive whiteboards to engage and motivate those who easily lose concentration.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students are taught in flexible teaching groups. In Years 7 to 9 for example, students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive extra support for literacy and numeracy and benefit from more individual attention in smaller groups. Higher attaining students have the opportunity to work more quickly through the National Curriculum. Plans are in place to develop these opportunities further next year. This tailoring of the curriculum to meet individual needs continues in Years 10 and 11, through a good mix of vocational and more academic courses, not seen to the same extent in the sixth form. There are more opportunities for those students who find GCSE work difficult. The availability of extended work placements and a vocational course at the local college helps the school to meet the needs of students who are in danger of becoming disaffected. There are good links with the community; for example, the school provides scholarships for gifted and talented students from local primary schools. Through its

status as a performing arts college, the school uses specialists from the community effectively to broaden opportunities for students. However, the specialist status is not well established throughout the curriculum and there is no requirement for students to study a performing arts subject in Years 10 and 11. Students speak enthusiastically about the good range of after school sporting activities. They take good advantage of these and many develop healthy lifestyles as a result.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Staff are highly committed to the care and welfare of students and the school has an effective pastoral system in place. As one member of staff said, 'We are passionate about the students'. There are secure arrangements to ensure the safety of students, including robust systems for child protection. Good procedures ensure that concerns about individual students are identified and addressed at an early stage. These include liaison with partner primary schools, early assessment by the learning support unit and partnership with external agencies. There is an effective range of provision for students with different learning needs, including the 'ACE' unit for students with dyslexia. These interventions result in all groups of students making satisfactory progress. One parent praised the support and encouragement provided, saying, 'My son now has much more confidence in himself and the work he is doing.' Academic guidance is developing well and increasingly teachers use an effective system to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve their work. This has had a considerable impact in raising achievement, particularly in weaker areas, so that it is now satisfactory overall. However, the school recognises that although challenging targets are set for students in some areas, this is not yet consistent across all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the school and, along with her senior leadership team, has put in place very effective strategies that have led to marked improvements in the achievement of all groups of students and in their personal development and well-being. These improvements have arisen from a committed approach and one that has empowered middle leaders. Strong teamwork and communications are central to this success. One parent said, 'I find the headteacher inspirational and I believe she and the deputy headteacher work as a good team, steering the school to greater success'. An effective system of self-evaluation, which involves leaders at all levels, ensures that areas for improvement are identified clearly and accurately, and action is taken to implement them. For instance, the focus on sharing with students the information to enable them to improve their work has helped to improve achievement. Although targets are satisfactory, they are not challenging enough to develop high aspirations and rapid progress. Governors carry out their role very effectively, especially in setting values for the school and in very rigorous challenging of senior staff. Recent appointments and restructuring of staff have been crucial in helping moving the school forward. Parents are positive about the school, but a significant number are concerned about a few

students sometimes disrupting learning, an area that the school is addressing. Outside agencies are used effectively to provide support.

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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	16-19
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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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	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	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

10 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Trinity School, Newbury, RG14 2DU

We would like to thank you for welcoming us into your school. We enjoyed our visit and valued the opportunity to talk with you in discussion groups, in lessons and as we met you around the school. It was clear that you enjoy school and we found that Trinity provides you with a standard of education that is satisfactory. You have a good range of subjects and good opportunities to enhance your education with interesting clubs and visits. You have good relationships with your teachers and you value the care you receive from them. Your personal development is good and you welcome the opportunities to help others in the community, both in and out of school. You make better progress now in mathematics and science and your achievement overall is satisfactory.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the governors, the headteacher and the staff to:

- raise the aspirations of all students, with a focus on setting targets that are more challenging, mirroring the best practice
- ensure teaching and learning are consistently good, with a clear focus on managing and engaging all students
- raise the profile of the specialist school status.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to raising standards. You can help by setting your sights higher and making sure that you ask for challenging targets. We can see that you wish to do well in school and that you will continue to support your teachers in their efforts to help you make even faster progress.

With good wishes for the future.

Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector