

Tudor Grange School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104109
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	323966
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Pam Haezewindt 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 (total)	1248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Rock
Headteacher	Jenny Bexon-Smith
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2005
School address	Dingle Lane Solihull B91 3PD
Telephone number	01217 055100
Fax number	01217 090455

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated in detail improvement since the last inspection where aspects of the following prevented the school from being outstanding: the achievement of higher attaining students, teaching and learning and the curriculum. The inspection also focused on the school's contribution to community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's data, lesson observations, including joint observations by inspectors and members of the senior leadership team, students' work and school documentation, meetings with students and staff, including the school's senior leadership team and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and some of these aspects have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Tudor Grange is an over-subscribed, larger than average school that serves the southern area of Solihull and surrounding villages. It is a relatively socially and economically advantaged area and few students are eligible for free school meals. Students' attainment on entry is mostly above the national average. The number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below average. Although the majority of students are White British, the number of students from minority ethnic groups is now in line with the national average. The number whose first language is not English has increased since the last inspection to broadly average. Tudor Grange has been a Specialist Technology College since 1995; it became a Training School in 2004 and a Leading Edge Partner school in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The ethos for learning is excellent and students say they enjoy coming to school because of all it offers, both in lessons and beyond. Their behaviour is excellent and attendance is high. The school makes excellent use of its specialist designations and innovatory projects to ensure that students leave school with knowledge and skills to fit them for their next step in education and their future economic well-being. A parent commented to inspectors that: 'Tudor Grange is an excellent foundation for life after school and teaches the pupils correct values and respect for themselves and each other.'

Students make good, and often very good, progress and attain standards that are well above average. The school's 2008 results in GCSE examinations exceeded the targets the school had set itself, with all students achieving five or more A* to C grades and 90% achieving 5 or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. After the last inspection, the school turned its attention to developing the curriculum provision within lessons to support higher attaining and gifted and talented students as well as focusing on extra-curricular events. This has paid off. Almost half of the students achieved 5 or more A* and A grades. In Key Stage 3, there has been an improving trend over the past three years. In 2008, almost every student reached the expected level (Level 5) in English, mathematics and science by the end of the key stage and the school's challenging targets for the higher level (Level 6) were exceeded. Student performance is regularly tracked and analysed. Any underachievement is identified from an early stage; consequently, intervention and, where possible, mentoring, is put in place. The 'college system', based on subject groups, helps because a Lead Teachers of Achievement can ensure that support is provided to targeted students in the relevant subjects. Students appreciate the many ways that they are supported to do as well as they possibly can from explanation and exemplification of how to do well, informal assessment and feedback on their work, to formal half-termly assessment and termly reports, as well as individual help from their tutors when they need it. Younger students also like being helped by older students in their vertical (mixed-age) tutor groups.

Students cite lessons as one of the reasons they enjoy school. They say that teachers make lessons 'exciting' and subjects easy to learn. There is often group work and lessons are 'discussion based'. One young person said that: 'We don't realise that we are learning because we are having fun.' During the inspection, there were several examples of outstanding teaching, both during lesson observations and the hour-long walk around classrooms that both inspectors undertook, dipping into lessons. For example, a Year 8 history lesson on diversity and the British Empire was both active and challenging and required its young students to think very maturely and take responsibility for some of their own learning and assessment. The teacher gently nurtured his students' understanding. The use of technology to support this was very good. Moreover, it was clear that the planning had taken good account of different ability levels and all students had the opportunity to achieve well. The school has put effort into improving teaching and learning that were judged good at the time of the previous inspection. The school now judges them outstanding and inspectors agree. The rigour of evaluation by senior leaders during observations in which both a senior leader and an inspector observed was excellent. The school's specialist status as a Training School has supported developments in teaching and learning very well, raising the aspirations of staff. Continuing professional development pervades the school whether it is by traditional in-service events, or partnerships with Higher Education Institutions and the students they bring. One result of the Training School has been the school's

involvement in coaching systems, with 30% of its teaching staff now involved in mentoring or coaching and a rigorous in-house system.

The school has improved the curriculum since the last inspection by making alterations to its structure and introducing new courses. Years 7 and 8 now make up Key Stage 3 and Years 9 to 11 Key Stage 4. This allows for more individualisation; the school can 'fast track' higher attaining students to take examinations early in subjects where they are doing very well, and spend more time where it is needed in other subjects or prepare for post-16 study and take AS level in information and communication technology (ICT). The curriculum pathways are well organised and set out for students to choose in Year 8, and the school includes a variety of vocational courses. Options are now organised so that taking a modern language is encouraged, and currently the school exceeds the first government benchmark of 50% of pupils studying a language, with ambitions to improve this significantly. One of the school's current priorities is looking into how it can develop the use of diplomas in Key Stage 4. In Year 7, the school has introduced an innovative course this term called 'Skills, Action, Service' (SAS) in which students learn or consolidate a skill and then apply it and eventually go out and serve the local or wider community. Another new project in Key Stage 3 links geography, science and PE in delivering a more cohesive curriculum, including off-site education. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which include a lot of sports and music and a variety of clubs and support groups, and this is another reason students give for enjoying school. Take-up is very good and regularly monitored.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good and supports students' personal development well. The formal curriculum provides opportunities for students to empathise with different faith groups from their own. World art and music are now incorporated into the curriculum. The school has an internationally themed week each year where a chosen country is studied in different ways and students are helped to understand the diversity of a different nation throughout the week. There are also visits abroad and exchanges to enhance language study. The 'shoebox' appeal organised through the colleges is a regular and successful annual event. Students contribute to their own community through being mentors, councillors and prefects. They are involved in performances beyond the school day which are open to the local community and which they have to plan for and prepare, all of which raise money for various charities. Year 8 Industry Challenge Day broadens students' understanding of the business community. The school does outreach work in primary schools, including booster classes in ICT, science, mathematics, design and technology, religious education (RE) and modern foreign languages, some of which involves students working with primary pupils. The school's Advanced Skills Teacher for RE also works with secondary schools and alongside the local authority adviser for RE in organising multi-faith conferences for secondary students in the region. There are various parent information classes to help with supporting students with various aspects of school life or life beyond. There is a very strong contribution to the community from the adult education side of the school, and the community use of facilities. For example, a tutor provided by the school enables very large numbers of Cubs and Brownies to undertake their computer badge using the school's ICT facilities. The school has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to promote community cohesion but has so far not audited for any gaps in its provision and drawn up a coherent plan. Whilst there is evaluation of some parts of its provision, some of it very good, there is no formal overall evaluation of the sum of those parts.

Students' personal development and well-being and the care, support and guidance provided are outstanding. Attendance is high and behaviour is excellent. Students are mature and articulate and clearly focused on achieving as well as possible. They say they have healthy

lifestyles, eating healthily and participating in sports regularly. Evidence shows how well the school encourages this. They feel safe in school and know whom to talk to should they have any worries. There are very few bullying incidents; there are bully buddies and bully boxes where students can write down anything they are worried about. Racist incidents are extremely rare and dealt with instantly. Much thought is given to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is integrated into the curriculum and provided within elements of contributing to the community. The college system provides a good pastoral structure, which is less intimidating than a whole-school structure in such a large school might be. The large majority of students like the vertical tutor grouping. Older students talk about helping and mentoring young students and the latter about the help they get from older ones. One summed it up well: 'Bigger people are helpful. They've had experience of what we are going to experience.' Students have opportunities to take on responsibility both within school and outside and do so happily. They think that they have a good 'say' in decision making, being represented on various groups, and could cite where changes had been made at their request, for example the instating of a Year 9 Awards Evening. However, students are not represented on the Specialist School Committee.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide excellent direction and work tirelessly to ensure that the school's vision drives the school forward with improvement constantly in mind. The senior leadership team has ensured that improvement since the last inspection is in place and it is not complacent in wanting to push still further forward and meet new challenges. It is bidding for sixth form status in conjunction with the adjacent school and is poised for such a challenge and the broadening of the curriculum that this could offer its students. There is a pertinent five-year strategic plan with short-term priorities planned into the one-year school development plan. Governors robustly support and challenge the school to ensure it meets its priorities. Leaders constantly look for ways to supplement its funding per student so that it can get the best for students. The school works with a variety of partners to improve provision, including with the local college to provide the International Baccalaureate. There are a number of links with parents and carers and consultations; however, a few think there could be more contact and their views sought more often. The school's leaders are confident yet always willing to learn and have found specialist status instrumental in opening doors and learning from the practice of others. Equally, there are frequent visits to the school as an example of best practice. The school consistently evaluates its specialist provision. Given its funding and outstanding outcomes, Tudor Grange provides excellent value for money. It has outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Formally plan for and evaluate regularly its contribution to community cohesion.
- Consider reviewing the way it links with parents.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

11 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Tudor Grange School, Solihull B91 3PD

I am writing on behalf of my colleague and myself to thank you for your contribution to our inspection of your school on Wednesday 10 December 2008. It was good to see you all in lessons and to speak to some of you in smaller groups. We found that you are very polite and mature and you gave us excellent information about your school. When my colleague and I walked around the school in the morning, we were very impressed by your behaviour in and between lessons.

We think that your school provides an outstanding standard of education. You achieve very high standards in your work. Teaching is excellent so that you learn well and you contribute to this by being eager and willing to join in discussions and active learning sessions. Tudor Grange provides an excellent curriculum, including its range of extra-curricular activities. Your personal development is outstanding. Some indications of this are your high attendance rates at school, your excellent behaviour and social development, and how well you know how to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school cares for you very well, ensuring that you achieve the very best you can and staff are vigilant about your progress and your happiness at school. Your school is exceptionally well led and managed.

We have asked your headteacher and senior leaders to look at just two things to take the school forward. One is to see what more the school can do to contribute to local, national and international communities and then to evaluate its contribution regularly. The second is to see whether it needs to put in place anything more to support links with your parents or carers, because a few thought that these were insufficient.

I wish you the very best for 2009 and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt HMI Lead inspector