

Trinity School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112429
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	325605
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Tom Grieveson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1875
Sixth form	380
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Armstrong
Headteacher	Mr Alan Mottershead
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2006
School address	Strand Road Carlisle Cumbria CA1 1JB
Telephone number	01228 607596
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is located close to the centre of Carlisle and has specialist language college status. It is much larger than average with almost 400 students in the sixth form. The school draws its students from a wide geographical area within Carlisle and the surrounding area. An extensive building programme is about to start which will result in a large part of the school being replaced. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is relatively low. A small number of students are from minority ethnic communities and about half of this group speak English as an additional language. A smaller than average proportion of students is entitled to a free school meal. Since the previous inspection, half of the senior leadership team and just over one third of the teaching staff are new in post. The school has been successful in obtaining a number of nationally accredited awards including Artsmark and the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Trinity School provides its students with a good education. Much has been accomplished since the previous inspection to develop the school's capacity to drive improvement. Important strategic decisions, made by an increasingly effective leadership team, have been successful in bringing about necessary improvements in key areas of the school's work. This has resulted in higher standards and ensured that most students are making good progress in their learning.

An effective professional development programme linked to the school's performance management system is helping teachers to become more effective in their work. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning is good and much improved. Most teachers demonstrate a keen understanding of the needs of students through good use of performance information. This ensures that in most lessons, though not all, tasks are accurately matched to students' learning needs and this enables them to make good progress in line with their capabilities. In a minority of lessons, tasks are not well matched to students' learning needs and this slows the progress made.

A significant change of emphasis has resulted in a good curriculum which is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs and aspirations of students. Full account is taken of these factors when courses are designed and pathways mapped for individuals. This has had a positive effect on students' attitudes and commitment to their studies and is a key driver in overall improvement.

The analysis and tracking of individual student performance is rigorous, providing the basis from which progress can be monitored and underachievement identified. In most instances, interventions to support students are swift and this strategy helps those who are falling behind in their work to catch up and make better progress. However, while this information is provided for all departments, not all are using it well enough.

Specialist funding and expertise has been used effectively to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards. Effective investment in information and communication technology (ICT) and the appointment of a web developer are supporting teachers well to make learning more innovative and interesting. The school's specialist strategy has successfully improved students' attitudes and commitment to studying a modern foreign language. The school actively supports modern foreign language teaching and the provision in neighbouring primary schools, and has developed a family learning scheme where parents are supported to mirror their child's learning. Over 500 adults attend language classes provided by the school with many gaining accreditations.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The large majority of students exhibit positive and mature behaviour. They display extremely constructive attitudes towards learning and each other. Students benefit from an exemplary level of care and this provides a secure platform from which they can pursue their studies. The overwhelming number of parents who made their views known to the inspection team were very supportive of the school's work although a small minority who expressed some criticisms highlighted concerns over bullying and the lack of progress made by some students. Both matters were fully evaluated during the inspection and are reflected fully in this report.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory and improving.

Academic standards across the extensive range of courses offered by the school are broadly average although there is variability between subjects. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Inspection evidence confirms that as a consequence of actions taken by the school, standards are beginning to rise and rates of progress are increasing. Students report that they receive good academic, pastoral and vocational advice and guidance. They feel safe and enjoy their time in the sixth form and this is leading to high retention rates for both academic and vocational courses.

The good curriculum is constantly being reviewed and the innovative three-pathway programmes are well matched to the needs and aspirations of students and of the local community. The school works well in partnership with local education and business providers. The enrichment programme and extra-curricular activities are good, and offer effective support to the curricular and personal development of students.

During the inspection, the sixth form timetable was significantly disrupted due to examination and revision arrangements. While a number of sessions were observed, these were not sufficiently representative of the school's routine practice. Therefore a judgement about the quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection has not been made.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and senior colleagues work effectively with the school's senior leadership team to achieve the strategic goals. Senior staff are well aware of the priorities which the sixth form needs to address and they demonstrate sufficient capacity to make the necessary improvements to secure sustainable improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

To raise standards further the school should:

- ensure greater consistency in the way departments use assessment information to monitor the performance of all students so that underachievement can be identified and quickly addressed
- ensure that all teachers take account of students' prior learning by making effective use of assessment information so that lessons are suitably matched to meet the needs of all learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When students enter the school their attainment is broadly average although their standards in science are higher than in English and mathematics. Achievement overall, is good. Standards at Key Stage 3 have been above average in English and mathematics since the time of the previous inspection. Although there was a slight decline in the proportion of students attaining Level 5 in English in 2008, there was a corresponding increase in the numbers reaching Level 6. Mathematics results improved at both levels and students reached their challenging targets in both subjects. Science results have been average since 2006 and although they increased slightly in 2008, school targets were not met.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are above average and improving well, with 67% of students attaining five or more good grades in their GCSE examinations. Improvement against the measure of five

or more GCSE grades at A* to C, when English and mathematics are included, is more modest but remains just above average. GCSE results in the school's language specialism are also above average and they are significantly above average in science. In addition, results from early entry examinations taken by Year 11 students in November 2008 further confirm that standards at Key Stage 4 are continuing to rise and that most students throughout Years 10 and 11, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are making good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Mutual respect is evident in relationships throughout the school. Conversations flow easily, students are welcoming and enjoy each other's company. They feel safe in school and appreciate the sessions with outside organisations that cause them to reflect on their responsibilities for their own health and safety. These are particularly valued by sixth formers at a time when they are preparing to live independently. A good example of students' positive and responsible attitudes is evident through work which is supporting them to become young drivers.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students enjoy school and are keen to learn. They speak enthusiastically about how they all benefit from the wide range of opportunities to extend their horizons and personal skills. 'An unbelievable experience' is a typical comment describing one of the numerous international visits on offer. Over 100 students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme at bronze and gold level and they rate it highly in helping them to develop leadership and team-working skills. Almost every student is involved in the wide range of activities that take place outside lessons. It is not surprising that behaviour has improved and is now good so that lessons can run smoothly. Instances of bullying have significantly reduced and when they do occur, action is quickly taken to resolve them. Exclusions for serious misconduct and instances of persistent absence have significantly reduced so that attendance overall has improved and is now average. These positive trends are the result of senior staff becoming far more closely involved in managing new systems and liaising well with other services in the city to tailor programmes for individual students.

Students are keen to play their part in the life of the community and, in so doing, develop valuable skills for the future. Changes to tighten the school council structure have strengthened their role in decision making. There is evidence of their influence in the design of the new building and the good catering options available. Trinity students now play a key role in the Carlisle Joint Schools Council and have a broader brief in contributing to health education across the city.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now predominantly good. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject. There is a good climate for learning and relationships between adults and students are good. In most lessons, planning is thorough and based on a good knowledge of students' needs because teachers take account of the detailed assessment information available to them. Objectives are precise and understood by students. Explanations are clear and skilful questioning helps students to improve their understanding. Tasks are varied and closely match the objectives. Well chosen, good quality resources, including the imaginative use of interactive whiteboards, help to engage and enthuse

students and maintain their interest. This was clearly evident, for example, in an outstanding Year 8 French lesson. As a result, the large majority of students make at least good progress and enjoy a real sense of achievement. In the few satisfactory lessons observed during the inspection, teachers' planning did not take enough account of students' prior learning. Consequently, lesson activities were not securely matched to students' needs because they did not cater for the full range of abilities in the class. In addition, some of these lessons were too teacher-led with students given insufficient opportunities to work independently or assess each other's work. Most teachers mark work regularly and their comments help students to improve their work but this is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum has been substantially changed and meets the needs of students more comprehensively than at the time of the previous inspection. The three-pathways system at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, together with effective use of prior attainment data, is now more closely matched to students' needs, aspirations and ability. Progression routes are clear and well established; they are under constant review and evaluation to ensure they are fit for purpose. A wide range of vocational and academic courses are offered that are well supported by work-based experiences and vocational opportunities. The school has very effective partnerships with a range of local businesses and educational providers to enhance opportunities for students. Quality assurance systems are well developed. The school provides a highly effective enrichment and extra-curricular programme to enhance students' academic and personal development. Students value this provision and there are high take-up rates. The ICT provision now meets statutory requirements and a range of courses are on offer in the school. The school provided robust evidence that these courses have been audited and meet statutory requirements. The students value the academic support and guidance provided by school staff in relation to curriculum choices and vocational opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care of students is exemplary. The senior leadership team have established a cohesive approach to the guidance of students that is impressive in the way it dovetails the roles of tutors, mentors and careers advisers. Students are confident that they make the right choices for their chosen paths because the school works closely with employers and organisations locally to equip students with the necessary skills and information to succeed.

The support for students who find it difficult to apply themselves to learning is very effective. The school is rightly proud of those individuals who make good progress against the odds. This is possible because the staff scrutinise assessment data to identify those students who will benefit most. They create unique programmes for them and closely monitor progress. Many parents value the regular information they receive to keep them in touch with their children's learning.

Teachers have significantly improved their use of assessment information when planning lessons and this has increased the rate at which most students make progress. The involvement of students in developing teaching and learning through the 'learning detectives' provides the school with a well considered student perspective on the quality of teaching and learning and this is helping to spread good practice throughout the school. Students are set challenging targets and understand how well they are doing in reaching them. In some lessons however,

they do not make the best use of their targets to focus on the areas where they most need to progress. This tends to occur where the quality of marking does not provide students with sufficient guidance about how to improve their work. It is most effective where it indicates to students, the progress they have made and gives pointers to exactly where they should focus their attention.

Safeguarding procedures for the appointment of staff and the protection of students are thorough and meet requirements. The school is however, seeking to quickly address some longstanding health and safety issues related to the premises.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. Key changes introduced by the senior leadership team since the previous inspection are proving to be successful in improving the capacity of the school to better meet the needs of all students and provide the momentum which underpins the improvements in students' achievement and standards. Long term strategic ambitions are clear with a secure focus on raising standards. The school has a clear view of its strengths and where it needs to improve so that the school development plan is appropriately targeted on those areas requiring most attention.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The school is actively engaged in revising its existing practice to plan for and promote community cohesion further. This review demonstrates that the school is an open and welcoming community where diversity is recognised and valued. A wide variety of local, national and global initiatives involve staff and the students in activities that celebrate religious, cultural, and ethnic differences. There is an impressive array of events which focus on creating a better understanding of how to deal with society's many sensitive and controversial issues. The international links and visits to other countries including the United States of America and to Africa offer many opportunities for students and teachers to widen their perspectives on life and other cultures.

Governors demonstrate a keen awareness of the school's strengths and where improvement is required. They are rigorous in challenging the school to improve and, while they are complimentary about the work of the senior team and staff, they offer a firm resolve in holding them to account.

There is good capacity to improve further and the school provides good value for money.

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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?	2	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?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	
The extent to which 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	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 learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

14 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Trinity School, Cumbria, CA1 1JB

Thank you for the manner in which you engaged with the inspection team during our recent visit to Trinity School. It was a pleasure to meet you all and to listen to your views about the school; we have taken these fully into account when reaching our judgements. Thank you in particular to those school council students who met with us and to those who gave their time to act as tour guides when we first arrived. We recognise that many of you were about to take important examinations and we very much appreciate your efforts to speak with us at what is a very anxious time for you. You all represented your school extremely well.

We have found Trinity to be a good school and the sixth form to be satisfactory although improving. We consider the quality of pastoral care which the school provides to be exemplary. The effective leadership of the headteacher and senior staff has ensured that much has changed for the better since the previous inspection three years ago. We were particularly pleased to see that most students are now making good progress in their learning and that standards overall are rising. The curriculum has been improved well to meet students' needs more comprehensively. Teaching and learning are predominantly good and the way that most teachers are using assessment information to plan learning is helping students to make better progress.

We had a large response from parents and carers to our questionnaire. You will be pleased to note that the overwhelming majority think, as you do, that Trinity is doing a good job. The small minority of parents who were more critical of the school's work, expressed concerns mainly about bullying and that not all students make the progress which they should. You told us that while there is a small amount of bullying it is much less than in the past and is dealt with well. Evidence tells us that most students are making good progress but not all. We have therefore asked the school to ensure that all teachers and all departments make best use of assessment information so that all students who require extra help receive it and that all teachers use this information to plan learning which meets the needs of all students in all lessons.

Please accept our very best wishes for the future in all that you do. I am sure that through your school council representatives you will find ways to support the school to improve further.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector