

Talbot House School Newcastle

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133779
Local Authority	Non-maintained
Inspection number	328765
Inspection date	26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	David Smith

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

Boarding provision
Social care URN
Social care inspector

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	24
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Terry Bevan
Headteacher	Mr Andy James
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Hexham Road Walbottle Newcastle Upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE15 8HW
Telephone number	0191 229 0111
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This was a single integrated inspection of education and social care (welfare). Social care was inspected under the Care Standards Act 2000. The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector and a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

Currently no students are resident at the school. There are 24 students on roll, including three girls. The school has exceptional approval for the two Year 6 students on roll. Six students are in public care. Nearly a third of the students are eligible for free school meals and they are all of White British origin. All students have a statement of special educational need because they are experiencing behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. They are referred to the school by the local and neighbouring authorities. The school holds the Investors in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It is going through a period of change and is developing ways of responding to local needs by, for example, opening a vocational centre. Leadership and management are satisfactory and systems to manage attendance and monitor teaching and learning are becoming more robust. Consequently, there has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The governing body helps to ensure that the school continues to have an adequate capacity for further improvement and provide value for money. The residential provision is satisfactory; the inspection has made recommendations for further improvements.

Students' achievement is satisfactory. This is because of satisfactory teaching and learning. There is a favourable student to staff ratio and staff work well together to meet students' learning needs. However, the marking of students' work is inconsistent and, as a result, they are not always made fully aware of how to improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory and students enjoy the opportunity to take part in exciting enrichment activities, such as skiing. Students' written accounts of the trip are good examples of their extended writing. However, the provision of activities after school is limited. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school is inconsistent and opportunities are lost to make better use of it to promote students' learning in other subjects. Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. They make good progress in mathematics and improvements in writing since the last inspection have contributed to ensuring that students make satisfactory progress in English. The available data and work show that current Year 9 pupils have the potential to succeed in challenging examination courses in the future. Students make satisfactory progress through Key Stage 4. This is evident in the number of points they attain in their external accreditation and the progress they make from the end of Key Stage 2 to 4. It is good that an increased number of the current Year 11 students are on track to achieve 5 or more A* to C grades in their GCSEs. However, some of their accredited courses are insufficiently demanding and this limits their preparation for the next stage of their education or work.

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. They enjoy being at the school and their attendance is satisfactory. Their attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory and they show the ability to work productively together. Relationships between staff and students are positive. Students take a full and active part in a wide range of physical activities. They also enjoy the healthy eating opportunities in school and meal times are pleasant social occasions. The school council makes a constructive contribution to developments in the school. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and procedures are in place to keep students safe. However, some policies are not up-to-date or followed with sufficient rigour. For example, too little is done to discourage students from smoking.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 3

Talbot House is currently not providing residential accommodation to students. Our inspection methodology relies on evidence found at the time of inspection and this essentially includes users' views about the service. As this evidence is not available when there are no students staying on the residential unit we have completed a proportionate inspection; the purpose of which is to decide that should an admission be made, the service would be able to work to a satisfactory standard. Because this is an inoperative service, the overall outcome for the boarding provision can be no higher than satisfactory.

Talbot House provides a satisfactory service to students and their families. The school meets most of the key National Minimum Standards but there are shortfalls identified in the paragraphs below which could potentially compromise the welfare of the young people.

The school promotes the health of the students and they are encouraged to have healthy lifestyles. For example, the school promotes healthy eating and staff encourage and support students to take part in healthy activities such as cycling and swimming. However, the school has not taken sufficiently robust action to discourage students from smoking. There are appropriate arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the students' medication. These help protect their health and meet their health care needs.

Teaching and care staff take action to safeguard students and to make sure the school provides a safe and consistent setting for them. For example, staff are good at supporting students to develop appropriate behaviour and they make sure information about students and their families is handled confidentially. Staff have had training covering how to protect young people from abuse and how to counter bullying. Staff try hard at creating an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. The school has a clear anti-bullying policy. However, records of incidents of bullying do not demonstrate that staff consistently implement aspects of this policy in practice. Records do demonstrate that the school addresses complaints appropriately and there are clear procedures for managing complaints and ensuring young people and their families are listened to. However the procedures have not been updated to include the contact details of Ofsted. There has been one complaint since the last inspection. The school makes sure that equipment such as fire alarms are kept in good working order and that there are regular fire drills to safeguard students and staff from the risk of fire. There are satisfactory procedures covering the recruitment and selection of staff to make sure the school only employs suitable people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff have a good knowledge of the students and try to make sure their needs are being met at all times. Students and their families have access to clear information about the school and the residential unit. However, the information about how to complain has not been updated. The school has a satisfactory system for monitoring the service and the care and welfare of the students. However, the school governors who carry out monitoring visits do not always carry out the recommended checks. Staffing levels ensure that there are sufficient staff on duty to provide appropriate supervision and support to students. The opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training are satisfactory and the care staff receive appropriate support and guidance in safeguarding and promoting students' welfare.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the records kept of incidents involving bullying behaviour include the measures used to respond to observed or reported bullying. (NMS 6)
- Ensure that pupils and their parents are told how they can make a complaint directly to Ofsted. (NMS 4.8)
- Ensure that school governors' monitoring visits include checks of the records specified in NMS 33.3 and an assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture and equipment. (NMS 33)

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the marking of students' work to make them more aware of how they can improve their learning.

- Ensure that ICT is extended to support learning in all subjects.
- Ensure that policies and procedures for students' guidance, including non-smoking, are kept up-to-date and implemented more rigorously.
- The school must ensure that it meets National Minimum Standards, currently not met, as detailed in the boarding section of the report.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Due to their disrupted educational history, the majority of students join the school with lower than average standards. They make satisfactory progress but the gap is too wide to close before the end of Year 11 and they do not meet national expectations for students in mainstream schools. Students in public care make satisfactory progress towards their individual targets and there is no marked variation in the achievements of boys and girls. Students in Key Stage 3 make satisfactory progress. They achieve well in mathematics where they are effectively motivated to work towards challenging targets. Since the last inspection an emphasis has been placed on improving students' writing and this has helped to promote satisfactory progress in English. Students' progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Externally accredited courses challenge and motivate the majority of students but some of the courses are too easy for higher attainers and this contributes to satisfactory rather than good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Students take advantage of the wide range of opportunities provided for exercise. Members of the school council would like to extend the facilities by having an adventure playground built on site. Meals are of high quality, promote healthy eating and are thoroughly enjoyed by the students. Breakfast and lunch are pleasant social events where staff and students engage easily in discussions and activities which help to promote the school community. Where guidelines are clear and carried out consistently, most students follow instructions. This happens, for example, in the application of barrier cream in motor vehicle engineering. Students state that they enjoy their time in the school and this contributes to their satisfactory attendance. The available data proves that students who attend regularly make better progress than those who do not. Behaviour is satisfactory. This has led to a marked reduction in the incidence of exclusions and contributes to helping students to stay safe. Students are satisfactorily prepared for leaving school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some good features but these are not consistent across the school. Typically, teaching is enthusiastic and the support assistants provide a careful balance of support and challenge which helps to give students the confidence to tackle their work. The use of assessment to track progress is increasingly robust and clearly shows that

students make satisfactory progress in their learning. Good opportunities are provided for students to work together and this helps to promote the preparation for the next stage of their education or work. Where teaching is good, there are high expectations and the students achieve well. Discussions in class are focused on challenging targets and the qualifications required for students' future careers. Relationships are strong and the effective use of praise encourages students to go the 'extra mile' in their work. They take pride in their work and their folders for subjects such as history and ICT reflect a positive approach to work. However, some work is not marked and when this is the case students are not made sufficiently aware of how to improve their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Year 6 students are taught in a small group with an appropriate curriculum that meets their individual learning needs. The Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a satisfactory balance of practical, creative and academic subjects. The school has an appropriate range of specialist teaching rooms and students particularly enjoy their opportunities to learn in active and practical subjects. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is satisfactory with a range of individual opportunities to follow courses that interest the students and provide a satisfactory level of challenge for most. However, some of the recently introduced vocational courses are insufficiently demanding. There are examples of the good use of computers in the drafting and re-drafting of students' work and the management of data but such provision is not consistent across the school. Good opportunities are provided in history to discuss, for example, the challenges for people living in adverse conditions, and the students offer their views in a sensible and grown up manner. Displays through the school celebrate students' achievement and help to extend their learning. Satisfactory college links and links with other agencies provide students with the opportunity to prepare for the next stage of their education or work. There are limited opportunities for the students to take part in activities after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Arrangements for safeguarding and protecting students are in place. Risk assessments are carried out as part of planning for activities. A mentoring programme helps to support students' induction and support for students in mainstream schools. The high student to teacher ratio ensures that students always have someone available to discuss any concerns. It is appropriate that the younger students have a supportive and consistent classroom setting. Appropriate plans are in place to discourage students from smoking but they are not implemented with sufficient rigour. Members of the school council would reduce the frequency of the breaks; longer breaks would then provide increased opportunities for more sustained activities. Some policies are not up-to-date which leads to a lack of consistency in some aspects of guidance. Parents who returned questionnaires are positive about the school and they appreciate the challenge of re-engaging their child in education. Links with other agencies and schools are satisfactory and the school is considering ways of providing further support for vulnerable students in mainstream schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Key senior leaders have managed the school through a period of change and have provided essential stability. This has ensured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The governing body provides a satisfactory balance of support and challenge, and contributes to the school's satisfactory capacity to improve. Its membership has been strengthened, for example, by the appointment of parent representatives. Self-review is open and honest but over-optimistic. Overall effectiveness is satisfactory, rather than good, as judged by the school. School improvement focuses on a manageable number of priorities but the measures of success are insufficiently linked to improvements in students' achievement and personal development. The monitoring of teaching and learning is now more regular and robust which helps to inform professional development for the staff. An ongoing project to raise awareness of global issues is part of the school's satisfactory work in promoting community cohesion.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of boarding provision	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which 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	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 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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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	3
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**

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Talbot House School Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne,

NE15 8HW

Thank you for making my colleague and I feel welcome and taking time to talk with us. We were particularly impressed with your positive behaviour during breakfast and lunch and with the high quality meals you receive. The school council was very helpful and I hope you are successful in your wish to get an adventure playground. None of you are currently staying in the residential provision but I am aware that staying overnight has been popular with many of you when you have had the opportunity.

Talbot House is a satisfactory school. You make satisfactory progress in your learning because of the satisfactory teaching and curriculum. I am sure you enjoy the wide range of activities that is provided for you. It is good that your parents and carers have positive views about the school. The senior staff and governing body ensure that the leadership of the school is satisfactory. They provide you with satisfactory care, guidance and support. The behaviour of most of you for most of the time is satisfactory and your attendance is satisfactory.

We have made some suggestions to further improve the school. It is important that all of the school policies are up-to-date and that you are aware of exactly what is expected of you. It would be good if you were provided with more opportunities to use ICT in all subjects. It is important that staff make you fully aware of how to improve your work, especially through marking. Suggestions have also been made to ensure that everything is correct in the residential provision.

You can help by working hard, behaving well and making sure that you attend the school as often as you can.

Yours sincerely

David Smith

Lead inspector