

Tarleton High School, A Community Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119752
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339526
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	785
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Finch
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Hardiker
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 lessons and saw 36 teachers. They held meetings with staff, governors and students. Sixty-eight per cent of inspection time was spent looking at learning. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, monitoring reports and students' progress tracking. Inspectors also took account of the 251 questionnaire returns from parents, 35 returns from staff and 100 returns from students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the achievement of all groups of students, particularly of boys and those of average ability
- students' behaviour and their contribution to school
- the use of assessment to inform lesson planning and secure students' progress
- the quality of care and support for students; particularly for those at risk of exclusion, those with special educational needs and those who are under achieving.

Information about the school

Tarleton High is a smaller than average comprehensive school situated in a primarily rural community. The vast majority of students are White British. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The school has specialist technology college status. It was designated as a high performing specialist school in September 2009 and became a leadership partner school with a gifted and talented strand. It became a Foundation with Trust school in January 2009, with a member of the governing body and a local Further Education college and International Aid Trust as trustees. The school provides extended school provision and promotes community use of its facilities.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Tarleton High is a good school. Aspects of the school's work such as students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy learning, the care, guidance and support for students and the effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being are outstanding. Governors provide outstanding support and the school achieves good value for money. The school has excellent systems in place to monitor students' progress and provide effective support to vulnerable students and those at risk of underachieving. Student's enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance and high levels of participation in extra-curricular activities. They make a good contribution to their school and are keen to take responsibilities as sports leaders, prefects, ambassadors, student councillors and on the governing body.

The school's provision is enhanced by its specialist technology status, extended school provision and a wide range of partnerships. Specialist funding has been used effectively to enhance teaching and learning for all ability groups across all subjects. The good curriculum provides a range of courses that meet most students' needs well. Excellent partnerships with primary and secondary schools and local further education colleges ensure that students are well prepared at points of transition. In 2009, all students leaving Year 11 went on to further education or training. Most parents who returned questionnaires said that they are pleased with the quality of their children's education.

Teaching is mostly good, and this, together with the excellent support structures, helps students to develop good personal skills and to attain highly in most subjects. Students' behaviour is generally good and they say they feel safe. Their overall attainment in GCSE examinations is consistently well above average. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their different starting points, which are broadly average to above average overall. However, students' performance in science was lower than expected in 2009 due to disruptions to staffing and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. There are also some occasions when the work in middle sets across a range of subjects does not meet all the varied learning needs of students. The quality of marking is variable with some excellent practice but some instances where it does not give sufficient guidance on how students can improve their work.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and, hence, leaders are aware of where improvements are needed. The leadership team is effective in driving improvement and has excellent support from the governing body to ensure that weaknesses are tackled decisively. Their vision to maximise everyone's potential is shared by staff who take care to ensure that all groups of students achieve as well as they can. Staff show high levels of commitment and have high expectations for all their students. They work hard to

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overcome accommodation difficulties and make best use of the available resources. All improvement issues from the last inspection have been thoroughly addressed. With the good teaching, strong drive for improvement and excellent governor challenge and support, the school has good capacity to bring about further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching across the school by:
 - extending monitoring and evaluation to identify and share best practice in teaching and learning, and thereby ensuring that it is fully embedded in all subjects
 - ensuring consistency in marking so that all students know how to improve their work
 - ensuring that teaching and feedback to students is consistently well matched to their varying needs and abilities, particularly in the middle ability sets.
- Raise students' achievement in science by stabilising staffing and securing improvements in the quality of teaching and departmental leadership.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students have very positive attitudes to learning and are highly motivated to succeed. These attributes help them to learn effectively in class and achieve high standards in the majority of subjects. The school has identified some underachievement by more able boys in the past and has put effective support in place to avoid a repetition of this. Students of all abilities and backgrounds engage enthusiastically in a range of social and cultural activities. They show respect for the views and needs of others and a maturity in discussion of moral and global issues. Their well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, together with their high attainment prepares them well for the next phase of their life. They are well informed of choices for their future and have high aspirations.

Students' behaviour in lessons is good and it is exemplary in those lessons that fully capture their interest. Their behaviour around school is usually good, although there are occasions when students display boisterous behaviour in the school grounds and as they move between lessons. This can delay their arrival to lessons. Nonetheless, students say that they feel safe and feel that any inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively by staff. A range of students, who spoke with inspectors, said that they feel their views are listened to and they have good opportunities to express them through different forums and through the Moodle system on the school's website.

Students have a good understanding of how to live healthily and maintain their emotional well-being. They enthusiastically participate in many and varied physical activities at school. While they understand the benefits of a healthy diet, the number of students taking school meals has reduced and some students have not fully adopted healthy eating into their lifestyles.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching is good or better. Good teaching is underpinned by teachers' excellent subject knowledge and good use of assessment information. In the best lessons, students are fully engaged in challenging work that develops their skills and understanding at a rapid pace. Assessment is used effectively to plan interesting activities that are well matched to students' abilities and the demands of the curriculum. Consequently, students enjoy learning; they understand how they can improve their work and make good progress. Where teaching is less effective, work is less tailored to the specific needs of individuals in the middle ability sets so that it does not fully extend the more able or support those of lower ability within the teaching group. However, where teaching assistants are deployed to support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, this support is effective and those students make good progress in lessons. The best teaching was seen in English, physical education, religious education, citizenship and technology. Supportive relationships are evident in all classes. Students show consideration for their peers and respond well to the revised behaviour management systems which are consistently applied across the school.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The curriculum is well organised to provide a good range of courses and opportunities to enrich students' learning. Basic skills and personal and social skills are promoted well across the curriculum at both key stages. Students are able to choose a range of options for GCSE including vocational courses and they receive good career guidance and opportunities for work-related learning. However, access to some courses is restricted through the three strands on offer at Key Stage 4 and some students expressed frustration at this.

The excellent care, guidance and support for students greatly enhance their achievement and ensure that they feel safe and well cared for. The weekly meetings that take place between support staff and academic staff ensure that students receive relevant support early on and sustain good progress. The school invests much time and resources in transition arrangements which help students to settle quickly into Year 7, make confident choices at Year 9, and secure post-16 destinations that are well matched to their needs and aspirations. The school liaises well with outside agencies. Parents who have had dealings with the parent support worker are extremely pleased with the support they have received. Although exclusions were relatively high last year, they are reducing as the behaviour policy and support systems become more effective.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and governors have in-depth knowledge of strengths and weaknesses in provision based on good quality self-evaluation. They have high expectations of students and staff and have set challenging targets, particularly with regard to students' attainment at the higher levels. Equality of opportunity is promoted well in all areas of the school's work. Students' progress is thoroughly monitored and the information is used effectively to support any students who are not making expected progress and to identify where improvements are needed in teaching. Heads of department generally make a good contribution to monitoring and securing improvement. There are, however, some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and leadership between subjects.

Governors are extremely knowledgeable, well organised and maintain close and highly effective links with staff and students to review the work of the school. The recent safeguarding audit undertaken by governors has ensured that the school has robust safeguarding procedures in place including staff vetting and recruitment procedures and

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fully up-to-date training and policies. The school has identified aspects of its work to promote community cohesion that require improvement based on a clear analysis of its own context. It has effective plans to promote students' understanding of diversity and cultural traditions beyond their own community through links with other schools and its international work. The school's enhanced links with the International Aid Trust is supporting students' growing awareness of global issues.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Approximately a third of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Most of those who responded said that their children enjoy school and are happy with their children's experience at the school. Several made positive comments about effective transition arrangements and the school's pastoral support through the personal development managers. A minority of parents expressed concerns about disruptive behaviour in some lessons and bullying in the school grounds and on buses. Inspectors did not observe any threatening or disruptive behaviour and found that the newly revised behaviour management policy is being used consistently and effectively. Students told inspectors that they feel safe.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tarleton High School, A Community Technology College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 251 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 785 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	26	150	60	23	9	6	2
The school keeps my child safe	73	29	161	64	11	4	4	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	99	39	136	54	13	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	27	151	60	24	10	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	39	16	170	68	33	13	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	16	161	64	41	16	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	13	182	73	30	12	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	52	21	168	67	14	6	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	17	177	71	23	9	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	20	145	58	35	14	16	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	12	167	67	42	17	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	42	17	162	65	33	13	10	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	22	163	65	23	9	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Tarleton High School, A Community Technology College, Preston, PR4 6AQ

Thank you for your welcome and helpful contributions when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed meeting with many of you and observing your work.

We found Tarleton High to be a good school. There are aspects of the school's work that are excellent. These are the main findings from our inspection.

- Care, guidance and support from the pastoral development managers, support staff and teachers are excellent. They share a strong commitment to help you all achieve to the best of your ability.
- You work hard in lessons and take pride in your achievements. Your good attitudes to learning help you to attain highly in examinations and secure further success when you leave school.
- You behave very well in lessons especially when you are fully engaged in your learning. However, we also observed some boisterous behaviour in the school grounds, which could be improved.
- You make a good contribution to your school and readily take responsibility.
- School leaders and governors have a good overview of the work of the school and are working effectively to further improve provision. Governors provide excellent challenge and support.
- Teaching is mostly good and this helps you to make good progress in most subjects.

We have asked the school's leaders to ensure that more teaching is good or outstanding by:

- monitoring teaching more closely so that the very best practice is shared across the school
- ensuring that all marking helps you know how to improve your work
- ensuring that all teaching and feedback is well matched to your varying needs and abilities, particularly in the middle ability sets.

We have also asked school leaders to bring about improvements in science so that you achieve better results in sciences.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall

Her Majesty's Inspector, on behalf of the inspection team

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