

Trentham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124388
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340557
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jayne Woodroffe
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Chesterton
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of the governing body, the senior leadership team, staff and groups of students. They looked at the school's data on students' performance; records of the support provided to students and of their progress; and the school's plan, policies and procedures, including health and safety, and risk assessments.

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

- the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment and other data on students' progress, particularly that of boys
- evidence for improvements in the proportion of good and better teaching
- the quality and consistency of marking of students' work across the school
- the school's systems for monitoring students' achievements, attitudes and attendance and linking this to departmental and other reviews
- the quality and effectiveness of self-evaluation at all levels throughout the school.

Information about the school

Trentham High School and Specialist Science College is smaller than the average secondary school but rapidly growing. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students are of White British heritage with a small but growing number from a range of minority ethnic groups. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. In recent years the school has been through a period of great turbulence, particularly in relation to a previous inspection judgement of special measures and because of proposed closure.

The school was awarded specialist science status and a Healthy Schools Award in September 2009. In addition, the school was accepted as a supported school for cooperative Trust Status in October 2009.

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

Trentham High is an improving school that puts students at the heart of everything it does. It provides students with a good standard of education. The school is led well by a determined headteacher who has clarity of vision and a commitment to ensuring that no stone is left unturned when it comes to making Trentham a better school. At the last inspection the school was deemed to provide a satisfactory education for all students. Now, two years on, there are tangible improvements right across the school and a growing confidence and belief among parents and carers, teachers and students. The school has emerged through a period of great turbulence of special measures and proposed closure. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to provide both the staff and students with the stability that was needed. Students are proud of their school and feel safe and well cared for. It is held in high regard by parents and carers, many of whom fought vociferously for it to remain open. As one parent wrote: 'I am extremely pleased that the school is now going to remain open. It is a good school with many loyal and hard working staff who have supported both the children and their parents through a very difficult time. I am proud to be associated with it.'

The performance of the school has fluctuated since the last inspection, due to high mobility of students, staff turnover and the uncertainty of the school's future. GCSE results improved in 2008 with 57% of students achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. Despite standards in mathematics and science falling in 2009, attainment is in line with the national average and students make good progress from broadly average but variable starting points. Students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress. The school has identified raising achievement in mathematics and science as a top priority and is implementing a rigorous programme of improvement. The impact of this can clearly be seen in better progress for all students. Boys and particularly students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do very well because of the good individual targeted support they receive. Students from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds also do well due to the good support they receive. Students enjoy their learning experiences as reflected in their good attendance.

The school's specialist status in science is beginning to make a significant contribution to students' overall achievement through the good curriculum, enrichment activities and the school's partnership with other schools. The scope of the work-related learning programme is wide and many of the Year 10 and 11 students spend two days per week on work-related courses. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is particularly successful where teachers plan for a range of activities that engage and interest students. Teachers use a range of questions that challenge students' knowledge and

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understanding. Where the quality of teaching is not as high, teachers have a tendency to give introductions which are too long. Students' work is not always marked consistently and, as a result, they do not always know what they need to do to further improve their work.

Behaviour is good and students are keen to learn. The care, guidance and support for students are good with particular strength in the ways in which the school addresses the full range of their academic and pastoral needs. Students' contribution to the school community is good.

Leadership and management are good. The school has gone from strength to strength since the last inspection. The dedicated senior leadership team and the governing body have set a clear direction for continued improvements. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The capacity for further improvement is therefore good. Resources are effectively deployed and value for money is good. They recognise, however, that middle leaders need to be given greater responsibility so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects, sharing good practice and holding their staff fully to account.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in English, mathematics and science by:
 - raising the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C to 70% by 2011.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - all work is regularly and consistently marked
 - all teachers apply the school's assessment procedures consistently
 - all students know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Give greater responsibility to middle leaders so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects, sharing good practice and holding staff fully to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enjoy their learning, they are well motivated and their achievement is good. Students enter the school with average prior attainment and make good progress from Years 7 to 11. Standards have fluctuated over the last three years but have continued to improve and in 2009 GCSE results were in line with the national average. Students performed particularly well in English, French and in some of the vocational courses, including health and social care, and engineering. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress because of the good level of academic and personal support they receive. The small number of students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress.

Students say they feel safe and are confident that firm measures will be used to ensure that any bullying, if it were to occur, would be dealt with swiftly. Students are happy,

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confident in taking lead roles in the school, for example as prefects, and have positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well in classes and around the school despite the narrow corridors. They show consideration and respect for each other and their teachers as they move around the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy playing an active role in the life of the school. Their contribution to many aspects of the school community is impressive. A substantial number play an active role as prefects and leaders to support a range of activities to benefit both other students and staff. Those who support individual subjects enjoy working with heads of department as critical friends. Students have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy and what they need to do to stay healthy, although some admit it is not always easy. Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They work independently and manage their own learning with growing confidence.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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?

Teaching and learning are good and, in some instances, outstanding. Over three

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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quarters of lessons seen by inspectors were judged to be good, with examples of outstanding practice. All teachers are specialists in their subjects and have access to a wide range of information about their students which they use carefully when planning their lessons. Support staff, linked permanently to individual subjects, also play an active role in helping to improve overall achievement, particularly of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Students enjoy their learning and are eager to do well in lessons, especially when they are actively involved. They respond particularly well when they see a practical application to what they are learning and respond well to skilfully chosen questions. Where teaching is not as successful teachers do not fully build on the responses of students to develop key teaching points or to engage other students in discussions. Also, despite good use of assessment overall to support learning, sometimes students' work is not regularly and consistently marked and teachers do not always explain clearly enough what students need to do to improve, nor follow up on whether students have responded to comments in their books.

The coherent and relevant curriculum is regularly reviewed to meet students' different and changing needs. The school has used its specialist science status to strengthen the curriculum well; partnerships established through the vocational courses benefit all curriculum areas. The curriculum promotes students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well through its well-planned course on personal, social and health education, as well as a course on citizenship and global studies. The range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those linked with science, further enhance and broaden students' experiences.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is good; the attention to students' individual, personal and academic needs is a strength of the school. All aspects of students' development are carefully monitored to ensure that any required interventions are swift and effective. The school provides good support for its most vulnerable students and makes good use of other agencies when required. Teachers, parents and carers, and students all describe examples of how the school has improved the life chances of many individuals. The school balances well the setting of high expectations with the provision of good-quality support. Examples of its impact are in improved behaviour and students' engagement in the school community at all levels.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

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The strength of the leadership provided by the headteacher, supported by the governors, is a key element in the school's improvement and its many good features. The headteacher provides strong leadership which has improved the school since its last inspection and during a period of many challenges. She has a clear vision for the school with a passionate belief in improving the life chances of all its students. Students are valued, and those with particular needs are nurtured well. Staff at all levels share this vision. This is well recognised both by students and their parents and carers, who appreciate the strong and positive school ethos that promotes equal opportunities well, both in relation to academic success and to the personal and social development of all students. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for further improvement. The monitoring of teaching is regular and accurate. Strategies to eradicate any weaknesses in teaching have been effective through regular support and coaching. The quality of middle leadership varies. Where it is good it has driven forward good improvement. However, many of the subject self-evaluations are lengthy and do not always sharply focus on what students need to do to improve further. The good practice that exists is not always shared or built upon consistently by all staff.

Governance is good. Governors play an active role in the developments of the school and have a good knowledge and understanding of what needs to improve. They support and challenge staff at all levels and ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. They continue to manage the school's finances well. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Although the school plays a significant role in its local community, including via strong links with local schools through a wide range of projects, it does not always evaluate the impact of this work. The school's international links with South Africa and France broaden students' horizons and extend their global awareness.

There are clear safeguarding policies and procedures in place and they meet government requirements. Staff work closely with a range of agencies to ensure the safety of more vulnerable students. The school deploys its resources well and provides good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers responded well to the questionnaire. The very large majority are happy with their children's experiences of the school. Many praised specific aspects of the school's work, including the care and support offered to them and their children. Many commented on the loyalty of staff during the challenging time when the school faced a threat of closure. They have confidence in teachers and in the leadership and management of the school. Parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school, feel safe and that they are well cared for.

A small minority of parents and carers raised issues about a low level of bullying but acknowledge that this is dealt with quickly. Her Majesty's Inspector discussed the few concerns raised by some parents and carers which related to individual matters rather than whole-school issues.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Trentham High School and Specialist Science 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 169 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 600 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	38	95	56	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	86	51	80	47	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	110	65	54	32	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	46	78	46	8	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	73	43	85	50	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	34	100	59	9	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	31	105	62	7	4	1	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)	71	42	77	46	6	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	47	79	47	5	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	76	45	75	44	9	5	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	36	93	55	5	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	96	57	67	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95	56	66	39	2	1	2	1

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.



15 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Trentham High School and Specialist Science College, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 8PQ

I would like to thank you all for your help during the inspection of your school. The inspectors found what you had to say very helpful in making our judgment about your school. We would particularly like to thank those who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us.

We were pleased to hear that so many of you enjoy attending school and that you feel safe. The care, guidance and support you receive are good and you are well prepared for the future with over 95% of you going on to further learning at college or at work. We were pleased to see so many of you willingly take part in the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those that helped you improve your work and those linked with your school's science specialism.

The inspectors found that you and your teachers have continued to work very hard despite some of the challenges that the school has been faced with, in particular the threat of your school closing. We found your school to be good. The curriculum is varied, allowing you to develop well as young people. It provides you with many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills. You told us that you find your teachers to be helpful and supportive and most make your lessons interesting by involving you in your learning. We were particularly impressed with the contribution you make to the school and wider community. A large number of you from across the age range act as mentors and prefects supporting other students and your teachers. We were impressed with your knowledge and understanding about adopting healthy lifestyles, although some of you said that you did not always put them into practice.

We worked very closely with your headteacher and other staff. They agreed on what the school should do improve further. We have asked the school to do a number of things:

Improve overall achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science by raising the percentage of you gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C to 70% by 2011.

Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:

- all your work is regularly and consistently marked

- all teachers apply the school's assessment strategies consistently
- all of you know what you need to do to improve your work.

Give greater responsibility to your school's middle leaders so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects, sharing good practice and holding staff fully to account.

You call all help by attending school and continuing to work. We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif

Her Majesty's Inspector

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