

Tottington High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105357
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	377232
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
Lead inspector	Shirley Gornall 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	906
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neville Kenyon
Headteacher	Brian Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Bernard Robinson

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection. Inspectors observed 38 teachers teaching 38 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with members of the school's senior team. In addition, inspectors observed students' learning and behaviour during 'Immersion Day' activities led by visitors to the school. Meetings were held with five groups of students, three members of the governing body, school senior leaders, heads of department, newly-qualified teachers and the school librarian. Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings. They analysed 282 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 149 received from students and 41 from staff.

Information about the school

Tottington High is an average-sized comprehensive school. The proportion of students attending who are known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately half that found nationally. An average proportion of students is from ethnic minority backgrounds and speaks English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is average. A few students enter or leave the school at times other than the normal starting points. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college and an Investor in People. It holds the International Schools Award, and Artsmark at gold level. A new headteacher took up post in September 2009. The school's performance exceeds the government floor standards, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school is a member of the Bury Secondary Learning Collaboration.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good and rapidly improving school which achieves its aim of fostering students’ personal development. Students and staff are proud to be members of the safe and happy school community.
- Students attain academic standards that are higher than the national average. Most make good progress in the vast majority of subjects. Their progress is excellent in English, history, geography and drama and is improving rapidly in mathematics.
- Teaching is good overall with some that is satisfactory and a small proportion that is outstanding. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They build excellent relationships with students and care for them as individuals. However, some do not always plan lessons that meet the needs of all groups of students and, on occasions, questioning does not sufficiently extend students’ thinking. Marking is accurate and frequent but does not consistently provide students with clear steps for improvement.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Students are polite, friendly and responsible. Poor behaviour is infrequent and students confirm that it is dealt with effectively. Students’ attendance is above average and rising.
- The school promotes students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively, including through its programme of cross-curricular ‘Immersion days’ and its range of opportunities for students to serve their school and wider community.
- The headteacher has brought about change swiftly and effectively. His vision is shared by committed and skilled senior and middle leaders. Quality assurance processes, however, do not consistently lead to precise action to secure improvement in some areas.

- The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Governors use their wide-ranging skills and experience effectively to support the school's improvement.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the headteacher has established strong management systems. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Hence, there is good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the needs of different groups of students are met in lessons through the provision of appropriate tasks, challenge and intervention
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that students are encouraged to provide extended explanations and build upon each others' ideas
 - ensuring that marking is of a consistently high quality so that students understand how to improve their work and act upon their teachers' feedback.
- Ensure that the outcomes of quality assurance are consistently communicated and acted upon by leaders and teachers.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is slightly higher than the national average, make good progress overall and gain GCSE results which are above average in most subjects. Students make excellent progress, leading to high attainment, in English, drama, geography and leisure and tourism. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades in mathematics is well above average, reflecting the impact of the school's specialist status. Students' progress in mathematics is accelerating following a dip in 2011 that was due to untypically high staff turnover. Results in some science courses have fallen below average, but achievement in science is now rising as a result of curriculum changes and improved teaching. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups, or between girls and boys.

The vast majority of students enjoy school and agrees that it prepares them well for the next stage in their education or employment. They comment that they make the most progress in those lessons where there are varied activities and a high degree of challenge, such as in humanities, English and the creative arts. Conversely, their progress slows when tasks are mundane or explanations are too lengthy. Students demonstrate good social and organisational skills when they are given opportunities to work cooperatively and they show perseverance when required to complete extended tasks. Students' communication skills are well-developed; they read fluently

in a range of subjects, speak confidently, and readily identify the best ways of solving problems. Their information and communication technology (ICT) skills are good and they relish opportunities to apply them. Their writing is generally adequately detailed, but some students' presentation skills are poor and insufficient attention is paid to correcting basic errors. Students are able to apply their mathematical skills in different contexts, for instance in drawing graphs in geography or calculating budgets when considering lifestyle choices.

Most parents and carers who completed questionnaires agree that their children achieve well. One commented, 'every child matters is at the heart of this school ... everyone is helped to achieve their best'.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have good subject knowledge and establish positive relationships with their classes. The best teaching stimulates students' curiosity and develops their thinking skills. This was the case in two highly effective history lessons in which teachers' incisive questioning deepened students' understanding of the appeasement of Hitler and the effects of British foreign policy. Some teaching actively promotes students' independence, such as in an excellent media studies lesson in which the teacher enabled students to structure and lead their own discussion about the features of a magazine cover, prior to constructing their own multi-modal text. The students used technical language accurately and developed their understanding through sustained discussion. The best teaching challenges the most-able students, such as in a mathematics lesson where complex equations captivated students' interest, leading one to remark, 'I just love the logic of algebra!' There is also evidence of teachers modifying tasks effectively to support individual learners in consolidating their understanding, as was the case in a very successful English lesson in which students discussed the formality of different text types and kept track of their ideas by placing stickers on a continuum line. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, students' progress is sometimes less secure because all students are expected to complete the same task in the same time, irrespective of their different skills and starting points.

The quality of marking is particularly good in history, English and art. Teachers' comments balance praise for students' achievements with advice on how to improve further and helpful references are made to the levels or grade criteria at which they are working. Across subjects marking is generally completed on a regular basis, but there is inconsistency in its usefulness. Not all teachers routinely insist on high standards of presentation and there is variability in the identification of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students do not always act upon the advice given by their teachers with regard to correcting their work.

Teachers' reports to parents and carers are generally useful and detailed, but on occasions teachers' comments are too general to assist them in supporting their children's learning. Teaching and the curriculum promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students are courteous, friendly and sensible. They display positive attitudes to their learning and show respect for their teachers and each other. Students value the school's new behaviour management system and eagerly collect 'green points' to earn rewards. There has been a substantial decline in the number of 'red points' given for poor conduct, and a corresponding reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions. The school is a harmonious and orderly community in which students feel very safe. Students are adamant that bullying is extremely rare and that staff will always take effective action if they know of its occurrence. Initiatives such as 'anti-bullying day' raise students' awareness of bullying in all its forms and help them to develop strategies to keep themselves safe in the world beyond school. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and take responsibility for their own actions. Students appreciate the improvements made to the school site that ensure their safety and provide them with a comfortable environment.

Most parents and carers agree that behaviour at the school is good. A few feel that lessons are sometimes disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors took particular note of this view in scrutinising behaviour records, observing lessons and speaking with staff and students. They found that very few lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour, and that when this occurs, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

Students' attendance is above the national average and rising. Very few students are persistently absent from school due to effective partnership working between the school, parents, carers and outside agencies.

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides dynamic and principled leadership. He is effectively supported by senior leaders who share a common vision and have complementary skills to secure the school's further improvement. Leadership roles have been reconfigured and streamlined. The senior team has been consolidated by the appointment of a business manager. Middle leaders' skills have been strengthened through high quality professional development and lines of accountability are clear. The governing body provides strong support and rigorous challenge. Individual governors have a range of skills and professional expertise that they use to good effect to improve the school, for instance by securing additional funding to improve dining facilities. There are effective arrangements for students to present their views to governors.

Clear quality assurance processes have been introduced that provide leaders with an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Lesson observations are undertaken on a regular basis by senior and middle leaders; joint observations with inspectors confirm that their judgements are accurate and their feedback is insightful. The outcomes of quality assurance are not acted upon consistently by all teachers, such as with regard to the quality of marking.

The school's motto, 'excellence through partnerships' characterises its increasingly outward-facing approach. Leaders are keen to develop best practice across all subjects, and through their work with Greater Manchester Challenge family of

schools, the Bury Secondary Learning Collaboration and local universities, they share effective approaches to learning. The school's curriculum is of good quality and has been broadened to meet the needs of all groups of students. Those who are identified as being gifted or talented value the opportunities the school provides, including through partnership with colleges and universities, to extend their learning through participation in extension programmes, such as a forensic science day.

The school's 'Immersion days' are very popular with students and provide excellent opportunities for them to deepen their thinking about cross-curricular issues such as disability awareness and personal responsibility. The programme includes engaging experiences that contribute strongly to students' moral development. Students who encountered Crocodile Joe's reptiles learned directly about environmental adaptation and discussed the moral implications of animal ownership. Social and cultural development is strongly promoted, particularly through humanities and creative arts subjects, and through the school's rich extra-curricular programme. Students show tolerance and understanding in their relationships with each other. The school's policies and practices promote equality of opportunity. Sensitive support is provided to enable disabled students and those with special educational needs to engage in all the school has to offer. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are assiduously monitored. The school has improved strongly since its previous inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



10 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Tottington High School, Bury, BL8 3LY

Thank you for the help you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks go to those of you who gave up your time to speak with inspectors and those of you who completed questionnaires. The inspectors judged Tottington High to be a good and rapidly improving school. We think you are rightly proud to be members of it. Most of you make good progress and achieve well. We agree that you receive a good quality of teaching and that your teachers know you well and care for you as individuals.

Many of you told us about the exciting extra-curricular opportunities you enjoy and about the good range of courses available to you. We were particularly interested to see how 'Immersion Day' provided you with interesting and different ways of learning. Your good, friendly and cooperative behaviour has a positive impact on the school. You make a real difference in your community, including through your charity work, your music and drama productions.

We think that the headteacher, governors and senior leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to take your school from strength to strength. We have asked them, with your teachers, to make lessons even better so that all of you are challenged and supported to do your very best all the time. Some teachers ask really probing questions to make you think hard and this approach should be extended. We have also noticed that there is a difference in the quality of marking in your books across different subjects. We have asked all teachers to provide you with clear information as to how to improve your work. Obviously, you have an important part to play by acting on their advice and by paying attention to the presentation of your written work. We think there is a great team spirit at Tottington, reflected in your school motto, 'Excellence through partnership' and we have every confidence that the school can improve further.

On behalf of the inspectors, I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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