

Trent Valley Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135666
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	364397
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1051
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ben Green
Headteacher	Tom Megahy
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 35 lessons involving 35 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the academy's work and looked at the improvement plan, assessment information, and governing body minutes and policies. They reviewed 180 parental, 143 student and 58 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well are current students, especially boys, progressing against their targets?
- How effective are strategies to improve students' attendance and support them in their learning?
- How accurate is the academy's evaluation of teaching and what is the impact of action taken to improve its quality?
- How effectively does the curriculum meet the range of students' needs?
- How accurately do senior and middle leaders identify priorities to drive improvement in outcomes for all students?

Information about the school

The academy opened in September 2008 and moved into its new buildings in September 2009. It is average in size and operates in an area where some students are selected by ability to attend grammar school. Almost a quarter of students are known to be eligible for free school meals; this is well above average. Almost half of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities and nearly 60 students have statements of special educational needs. A low proportion of students come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The academy has specialisms in technology and performing arts. It holds the Inclusion Quality Mark and Intermediate International Schools Award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The academy provides a satisfactory education for its students. It has made significant improvements in many areas since it replaced its two predecessor schools in 2008 and now has several good features. Achievement is improving rapidly because of effective changes to the curriculum, especially for older students. This is particularly the case for current Year 11 students who are the first to benefit from the wide range of vocational courses. As a result, these students are on track to meet their challenging targets and raise attainment closer to the average nationally from being well below average in 2010. Students' progress is satisfactory and improving. It is good in some subjects but this is not yet the case in all areas of learning.

Students have mostly positive attitudes to their learning and are proud of the academy. Most behave well and the rate of exclusion has declined to be well below average. At the same time, attendance has improved and very effective work with individuals and their families has halved the number of students who are persistent absentees. Students feel safe and are confident to report any concerns to staff. The academy is particularly successful in supporting students with a range of specific needs. These students speak very warmly of the significant changes this support makes to their confidence and work. Students take on a wide range of responsibilities, representing the academy in the community, working with local primary schools and providing their views to help improve teaching.

The quality of teaching is improving. There are good features in planning, relationships and assessment but overall there is still inconsistency across lessons. Work is not always matched to students' differing abilities and some teachers do not check students' understanding regularly enough so that they can adjust approaches to learning where necessary. In the best lessons, teachers challenge students to develop their ideas through effective group and paired discussion. However, this is not consistent across classes and some students struggle to express themselves orally. Literacy and numeracy skills are emphasised in English and mathematics lessons but teachers in other subjects do not consolidate these skills sufficiently.

The academy's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Senior staff set a very clear direction for the academy based on a strong commitment to improve achievement. Effective leadership has contributed significantly to improvements in the curriculum, students' behaviour, attendance and progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and firmly based on thorough review of provision and detailed analysis of progress data. Middle leaders assure the quality of provision in their areas with increasing effectiveness. The dissemination of the most effective elements of teaching is still developing.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment further by ensuring that:
 - students make consistently good progress in all subjects
 - teachers in all subjects take opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills
 - teachers develop students' capacity to explain their ideas fluently and justify them through discussion.
- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - match work and materials more closely to students' differing abilities
 - use questions effectively to check students' understanding and adjust lessons as necessary
 - regularly share the most effective practice, especially in those areas identified as requiring improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with attainment which is well below average. By the end of Year 9, attainment is below average but is improving rapidly. The attainment of Year 11 students in 2010 was low overall although many indicators improved on 2009. The school's assessment information indicates that current Year 11 students are on track to exceed the challenging targets set for them, based on the performance of the top 25% of similar schools. Using results from early entries, especially in English, mathematics and science, the proportion achieving at least five higher GCSE grades is predicted to rise to the national average. The figure including English and mathematics is on track to improve by around 10%. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities made broadly satisfactory progress in 2010. Some groups, especially students who were known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, made better progress than their peers. Boys made less progress than girls. Based on the academy's latest assessment data for 2011, students' progress across all these groups, including boys, is on track to be at least satisfactory and often good. This represents rapid improvement.

In lessons, students make satisfactory and often good progress. They settle to work quickly and collaborate well in pairs and small groups. They enjoy discussion and practical activities, for example when challenged to check errors in the settings of sewing machines in a textiles lesson. Many answer teachers' questions confidently but a few find it difficult to express clearly what they want to say.

The academy ensures that students from different backgrounds work well together, understand each others' cultures and support one another. An impressive range of cultural activities raises aspirations and engages students' curiosity about the world. Students are welcoming and courteous, showing a positive approach to one another. Relationships are strong and students respond appropriately when their behaviour is corrected. Students report that they feel safe. They say that bullying is rare and are confident that any instances will be dealt with effectively. They have good awareness of risks to their

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personal health and well-being. Students develop a strong sense of a healthy lifestyle through participation in two hours of physical education and a clear knowledge of healthy foods. A large majority of students reported that they understood key aspects of healthy lifestyles in a questionnaire issued in June 2010. Subsequently, the new fitness suite has increased participation in exercise and students have contributed ideas enthusiastically in the recent acquisition of the Healthy Schools Award.

Students welcome the many opportunities to take responsibility, for example in sports leadership and as peer mentors. They work effectively with others, including partner schools, charities, and the local community. The school council makes a positive contribution in developing ideas to make the academy better. The academy has a well developed work experience programme and Year 9 students take a course in 'employability skills'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their subjects well and their relationships with students are good. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations for students. This ensures good motivation and progress. Generally, teachers set clear objectives and students know what they need to learn. They also know their targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Most lessons have a good range of activities, though in some the teacher talks for too long and this slows the pace of learning. Support for students, who have special educational needs

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and/or disabilities in lessons is effective. However, teachers do not always match work to students' abilities or use questions effectively in all lessons.

The curriculum caters well for the range of students' interests and aspirations. Students in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a wide range of subjects and a good mix of academic and vocational approaches, including courses at local colleges. Increasingly, students start qualifications in Year 9. There are also effective projects to improve students' reading in Key Stage 3. Students clearly value the successful 'learning for life' programme, which supports their personal development. A high proportion of students enjoy the extensive extra-curricular activities which range from science clubs to cultural and sporting events. The academy's specialisms make a good contribution to its overall effectiveness. The range of applied technology courses, dance, drama and music are popular subjects in Key Stage 4 that add diversity to the curriculum. Staff in the specialist subjects also contribute well to the development of teaching, for example in piloting strategies for the electronic marking of students' work. Beyond the academy, staff teach dance in local primary schools and there are also good links in performing arts with the nearby special school.

Students receive good care, guidance and support. They are known well by staff and their needs are identified promptly. The academy has developed a flexible response to individuals, tailoring the curriculum to their particular needs and providing very effective support. For example, the attendance panel works closely with parents and carers and has achieved dramatic improvements in the rate of absence for targeted students. Other programmes have assisted in avoiding exclusions and improving behaviour. Students are well prepared for joining Year 7. Progress data and behaviour referrals are monitored thoroughly, ensuring that any student with a pattern of underachievement is identified and support provided.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

The principal and senior leaders embed ambition and drive improvement well. They set a clear vision for the academy which is shared by staff and strongly focused on raising achievement. There are rigorous systems for monitoring performance and evaluating progress, providing good information to identify the academy's strengths and areas for improvement. The academy's improvement plan contains clear and relevant priorities. The action taken to improve attendance, achievement and approaches to teaching has been effective in raising standards. The school's leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. There is a full programme of observations and guidance, but comments about how teaching affects students' learning vary too much in quality and frequency.

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Members of the local governing body review the academy's progress rigorously and hold senior staff to account. They establish a clear strategic overview which informs the academy's direction, based on success for all students. They review policies regularly and ensure that students are safe and cared for well. The academy values all its students and is effective in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Students from different backgrounds mix well. The progress of some groups who have not achieved as well as others in the past has improved and is now similar to that of their peers as a result of governors' direction and determined action, support and interventions by staff.

The academy ensures that students are safe and this is endorsed in students' and parents' and carers' questionnaires. There are clear and effective systems for safeguarding young people and the requirements for safe recruitment, training and monitoring of staff are rigorously in place. Students speak positively of the level of care and support provided when they experience difficult circumstances, including very effective liaison with external agencies.

The academy has rapidly become a fully inclusive, cohesive community. Staff analyse its impact on community cohesion and plans demonstrate an accurate understanding of the local context. The strong international dimension, driven by the International Schools Award, has raised students' awareness of different cultures and backgrounds. There are active links with schools in Senegal, Pakistan and the USA. Links with other academies are developing understanding of different communities nationally.

The academy's work with parents and carers is improving, especially in using text messaging to communicate important news and in its work to support students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. The academy has effective partnerships with a range of organisations which add to students' experiences and achievements. The school provides students with good opportunities to learn, take responsibility and show leadership through their developing community partnerships with local schools, colleges and employers.

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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	3
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	3
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
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	3

Views of parents and carers

The percentage response to the questionnaire was broadly in line with that found nationally. The views of most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are positive with many complimenting the academy and teachers. However, some parents and carers indicate that their views are not taken into account and they are not helped enough to aid their child's learning. This was also mentioned in comments made by a small number of parents and carers. The academy acknowledges this as an area for improvement. Inspectors found that, overall, the academy's communication with parents and carers is improving, and it is very effective when supporting students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Trent Valley Academy 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 180 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1051 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	33	107	59	11	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	69	38	103	57	5	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	75	42	91	51	11	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	36	104	58	10	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	65	36	104	58	7	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	23	116	64	21	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	16	127	71	17	9	0	0
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)	49	27	103	57	8	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	32	115	64	5	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	65	36	90	50	16	9	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	24	101	56	16	9	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	67	37	96	53	10	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	43	88	49	11	6	1	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 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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



27 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Trent Valley Academy, Gainsborough, DN21 1QH

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your academy. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us to find out about the academy. This letter is to tell you what our conclusions are following the inspection.

The academy is improving and provides you with a satisfactory education. Results in examinations have improved and meet the academy's challenging targets. Your attendance has also improved and is now broadly average. You generally behave well and there are fewer exclusions. You told us that you feel safe and that you are confident that any concerns you raise will be dealt with promptly by staff. Teaching in the academy is improving and the majority is good. Teachers set you clear objectives and ensure that you know your targets and what you need to do to improve. The curriculum is broad and provides you with a good range of choices, especially in Years 10 and 11. There is a wide range of activities and events which many of you enjoy. Staff know you well and monitor your progress closely. Senior staff set a clear direction for the academy and all staff are committed to making your education even better.

We asked the academy to improve in some areas. These include:

- raising results further by ensuring that more of you make good progress in all your subjects, have opportunities to improve your literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects and develop your confidence in explaining your ideas
- improving the consistency of teaching by ensuring that teachers match work to your different levels of ability, check regularly whether you understand or not, and share really effective teaching approaches with each other.

We enjoyed our visit to the academy and wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

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