



Tarporley Community High School - A Specialist Mathematics and Computing School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111416
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278687
Inspection dates 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Eaton Road
School category	Community		Tarporley
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Cheshire CW6 0BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01829 732558
Number on roll	1056	Fax number	01829 733945
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr T Crotty
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Ms S Lee

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	Inspection number 278687
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a mixed 11 to 18 comprehensive in a rural area. It is of broadly average size with a sixth form of 150 students and has specialist status for mathematics and computing. Fewer pupils than average are identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, speak English as an additional language or are entitled to free school meals. Almost all pupils are of European origin and the school serves a relatively advantaged area. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school that its overall effectiveness is good. Good features include the personal development and well-being of students, the care, guidance and support which they receive, curriculum provision and the improving quality of the teaching and learning. The staff are highly committed to the students and all this helps students to attain standards which are well above average. Key Stage 3 students made outstanding progress in 2004/05. Although there was also significant improvement in achievement at Key Stage 4, there remains some underperformance to be addressed, especially amongst boys and measures are in hand to tackle this.

The school gives good value for money and its specialist status has enabled strong partnerships with partner schools and the wider community. Students enjoy coming to the school and generally behave very well. Most parents are supportive of the school but a small number have concerns about bullying, and the effectiveness of communication with the school. Much could be gained by routinely using more effective systems to track the students' personal and academic progress. Information could then be used much earlier to take more rapid action on any underperformance. The headteacher and senior leaders share a clear view of the direction in which the school needs to move and some plans already in place have the potential to contribute to the school's capacity for further improvement. An example of this is the work begun on assessment for learning. However, the pace of securely embedding such new initiatives needs to accelerate. Developments can then be shared widely enough by staff to show maximum impact on students' learning.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education and students' achievement is above average. Recent improvements to sixth form study facilities are being well used and contribute much to students' achievement. There is a strong sense of community in the sixth form and mutual respect between teachers and students. Students are positive, mature and confident and their attitudes to study are exemplary. Teaching is good and the quality of care guidance and support is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Routinely use robust systems to track the students' progress and identify much earlier where and why pupils are experiencing problems and then take quick and appropriate action for improvement.
- Accelerate the implementation of assessment for learning so that all pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.
- Raise standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Sharpen monitoring and evaluation procedures so that the desired impact of improvement work on pupils' learning is clearer.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students enter the school with above average attainment. The 2005 results in national tests and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations represent a reversal of a downward trend in the previous few years. This improvement in results reflects the school's actions to arrest the decline and more is planned to sustain momentum. Progress seen in lessons and samples of work during the inspection was good in both key stages. On the basis of Year 9 students' prior attainment, their achievement is outstanding. At Key Stage 4 the achievement of both boys and girls improved significantly from 2004 to 2005. However, girls achieve better than boys, despite a narrowing of the gap in recent years.

Students in the sixth form achieve well in relation to their starting points. General certificate of education advanced level (GCE A-level) results improved in 2005 and most students produced results that were at least in line with their potential and a high proportion attained the highest grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good and this makes a strong contribution to their progress. They develop a high level of maturity and self-confidence by the time they leave. There are good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, a recent visitor from South Africa addressed students on issues such as oppression and apartheid. Students found this thought provoking and it helped them to reinforce their own strong values and principles.

Attendance is broadly average and there is very little unexplained absence. Students enjoy school life including lessons and other activities such as lunchtime and after school clubs. Attitudes in lessons are good as is behaviour in and around school. The school takes firm action against smoking and students say that it has reduced considerably.

Students respond well to the school's encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles, for example, by taking regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. Students are well prepared for their future and economic well-being. One example of this is the regular careers events held at the school.

The students at this school develop a good sense of community. For instance, they generate many ideas for improvements to the school to benefit everyone. Students also frequently raise money for good causes, for example through non-uniform days.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges teaching and learning to be good and the inspectors agree. Improving teaching and learning is a priority for the school. The impact of this initiative is clear in the best lessons, some of which were outstanding.

In the best lessons teachers give the students frequent chances to reflect on the learning objectives. Teachers ask open-ended questions and skilfully chair the responses, which helps the students to respond thoughtfully to each other and deepens their learning. The better lessons also give students many chances to work in pairs and groups. Students enjoy this way of working. They also feel they make better progress when the teachers make sure all students know exactly how well they are doing. They appreciate knowing exactly what they have to do to improve and to reach their target levels or grades. Despite some good practice, this does not yet happen enough in all lessons and with all teachers.

In the less effective lessons teachers do not give students enough chances to explain or reflect on their learning. The closed style of questions tends to lead to very short and unelaborated responses. Students do not have enough chances to work with each other.

Some of the written comments on students' work are highly informative, but this is not always the case. There is also too much variance between subjects in how rigorously teachers track the students' progress to make sure they are doing as well as they should. The very good system used in mathematics, for example, is not apparent in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of courses helps all students gain recognised qualifications. The development of skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT is good. The school's specialist status ensures that all pupils follow a full ICT course and leave the school with a recognised qualification in the subject. The school has also recently introduced a new Key Stage 4 curriculum which allows all pupils to follow a vocational GCSE course. Pupils can also choose to specialise in arts, humanities, languages or technology from age 14, as well as in ICT.

Good support helps students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to do well. In Years 10 to 11 there are alternative courses for a small group of students more suited to vocational courses, allowing them to study at a local college of further education.

In the sixth form there is a high rate of successful course completion. The blend of academic and vocational courses is well-matched to the students' needs. There is a good enrichment programme, often delivered by bodies from outside the school.

Events such as Citizenship Week effectively promote the students' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. There is a good programme for personal, social and health education. Good links with the local community enhance careers guidance. All Year 11 students receive advice from local employers on interviews, applications and curriculum vitae. There is a very good range of extra curricular activities. Many students enjoy taking part in the numerous clubs, societies and trips.

The school thinks it should broaden further its courses for the 14 to 19 age range and inspectors agree.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, advice and support for students. Learners feel valued and well cared for. For instance, typical comments to inspectors from students in Year 8 included 'this is a caring school with a family feel about it'. The staff are highly committed to promoting the health and safety of pupils. There are good arrangements for child protection and the staff are highly vigilant. Although a few parents have concerns about bullying, students of all ages say that this is not a significant problem and the school deals with it well.

Students with learning difficulties, disabilities or other barriers to learning are supported well and this makes a good contribution to their progress. The school recognises that procedures to monitor the progress of those with learning difficulties can be improved and is addressing this. The school's mentoring program is good. Many students in danger of underachieving are given additional individual support and advice by staff. The school works well with many outside agencies to support and guide students, for instance, regarding careers and further education options. This leads to very good school leaver outcomes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school judges its leadership and management to be good. The inspection team agrees. The staff are highly committed to the students. The headteacher has given a strong lead in acquiring specialist status for the school and she and the senior leadership team have established a culture in which staff feel valued, supported and challenged to improve. Since the last inspection, ICT provision has increased significantly.

Workforce reform has been used thoughtfully to enable staff to focus on developing teaching and learning. Good use of national initiatives such as assessment for learning is beginning to show some impact, although this is not yet consistent across the whole school. The school has the capacity to improve, and development planning is coherent. However, more work is required to take some initiatives beyond their early stages. The school recognises the need for a sharper focus on students' learning in its monitoring and evaluation. This would help planning to be increasingly proactive and sensitive to changing circumstances and accelerate the pace of improvement. The school provides good value for money. It has used its finances and specialist status effectively for the

upgrading of accommodation, such as the new sixth form centre. Governors are knowledgeable and positive about the school and discharge their responsibilities effectively, helping the school to establish priorities for improvement. This contributed to the significant improvement in the 2005 test and examination results.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you about the things we found out. We enjoyed talking with you and we were impressed by your maturity and self-confidence. We learned that you enjoy coming to Tarporley High School because it is a good school where you progress well and feel safe. You told us that there is always someone on the staff who can advise you if you have any problems. We know that you are pleased with how firmly the school deals with smoking and bullying. We were impressed by your sense of community, for example the way you raise money for good causes, through non-uniform days. It was also good to hear how much some of you enjoyed the campaigning for the School Council elections and feel that it gives you a say in some of the things that happen in school.

Teaching is good. Some of you told us that the teachers are the best thing about the school. You also said that you specially like the chance to work in pairs and groups. You generally behave well and all this explains why the school's examination results improved so much last summer. Nevertheless, some of you, especially in Years 10 and 11 can do even better. You told us that you make better progress when teachers make sure that you know exactly how well you are doing and what you have to improve to reach your target levels or grades and we agree with you.

We were pleased to learn that you have more ICT lessons than you did when the school was last inspected and that you all leave school with an ICT qualification.

Although the school is doing lots of things very well, we think that it can do even better. The improvements needed are:

- all teachers using the same systems to tell you quickly about any problems you have with your work and why
- all teachers telling you, clearly and regularly, exactly how to improve
- raising standards in ICT
- making sure the staff keep a check on the progress of any new ideas they put in place to improve the school, so that they know how effective they are.

We would like to thank those of you who talked to us and let us know what you think of the school. We found this very helpful. We would also like to wish you all every success for your future at Tarporley Community High School.