

Tong School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107366
Local Authority	Bradford
Inspection number	309392
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Josephine Nowacki 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1369
6th form	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gerry Sutcliffe M.P.
Headteacher	Mrs Lyn O'Reilly
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Westgate Hill Street Bradford West Yorkshire BD4 6NR
Telephone number	01274 681455
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Tong School is situated towards the south east of Bradford. The school is much bigger than other comprehensive schools. Approximately 91% of students who attend the school come from areas that are in the 20% most deprived wards nationally. Around two thirds of students are White British and the remaining third are from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Pakistani. Around 21% of students speak English as an additional language. The majority of students entering the school at Year 7 have reached standards that are well below the national average. The number of students entitled to free school meals is more than double the national average. At the time of the inspection, there was a small number of students with a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average.

The school has had specialist status in sport since 2001. Tong School holds awards for Investors in People, Healthy Schools and has the Sportsmark.

Sixth form provision is offered jointly with a nearby school and is known as Tong Yorkshire Martyrs (TYM).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. The headteacher, very ably supported by a strong senior leadership team, provides inspirational leadership. Tong School is a school facing challenging circumstances. In 2007, the challenges were greater than usual: an ongoing building project, a very high number of experienced staff leaving for promotion or retirement, difficulties in recruiting new staff, and an unusually high proportion of students with severe personal and emotional problems. As a consequence, the improving trend in achievement and standards seen in 2005 and 2006 declined in 2007. Standards are low but they are average overall. Attainment in science has declined, especially at Key Stage 3. Most students make satisfactory progress overall.

Personal development and well-being of students is satisfactory overall because despite the school's best efforts, attendance is below average for a significant minority of students. Many students behave very well, but there are some students whose behaviour is poor and this leads to some disruption in lessons. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with much that is good and very little inadequate. It is evident that there has been a renewed focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning but there is still some inconsistency in the way teachers use classroom assessment to improve learning. The curriculum is good and increasingly meets the needs of all students, including those at risk of disengaging. Students appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports. The quality of care and support that students receive is good. The school has made extensive use of its specialist sports status and is developing high quality provision which impacts across the school. For example, students taking sports leadership awards are encouraged to apply their leadership skills in other subjects.

The school's self-evaluation shows that senior leaders have a clear understanding of both the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Leadership and management are good overall. There is some inconsistency in the quality of leadership in a few areas of middle management level, but this is being addressed.

The school has a 'can do' culture. It is a vibrant, thoroughly multicultural learning community with all the staff sharing a common philosophy. There is a good sense of teamwork and mutual respect between staff and students. Because of the measured and sustained improvements since the last inspection, good results in recent modular examinations and current standards that are at least satisfactory, inspectors judge that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Provision for post-16 students is satisfactory with some good features. Standards in examinations vary between subjects; many are high but in 2007 they are, overall, around national average levels. In relation to their starting points, many students make satisfactory progress. However, students in media, sociology and psychology achieve consistently well and achieve grades at GCE A level that are above those expected of them. Processes for monitoring students' progress are effective in identifying and addressing underachievement. Retention rates are good. Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The college has worked hard to improve attendance and it is now average. Effective collaboration with Yorkshire Martyrs Catholic College supports a good range of courses. Provision is offered at Level 1 and Level 2 to encourage students not yet ready for advanced level study to stay on and gain further qualifications. Most students

are very positive about their experience in the sixth form and value highly the individual support they receive from their teachers and in particular, the head of sixth form. Progression to higher education is good. Leadership and management of the extended sixth form are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise attainment, especially in science.
- Improve attendance.
- Be more consistent in the use of classroom assessment to improve learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are low but they are average overall, reflecting the low levels of attainment the students join the school with, the high proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the high number of students for whom English is not their first language. Test results in 2007 for Year 9 students improved in English, stayed broadly the same as 2006 levels in mathematics and declined in science. The proportion of students in Year 11 achieving the equivalent of at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C improved in 2007, although it remained below the national average. In 2005 and 2006 students made good or better progress during their time at school. However, in 2007, the progress students made declined overall and was satisfactory. Students from minority ethnic groups perform better than other groups. Boys do slightly better than girls. Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs make satisfactory progress although a few do not make as much progress as they could.

The school did not meet all of its attainment targets in 2007. It is not complacent about this. Robust strategies and interventions are in place to ensure the school is back on track and these are beginning to have a positive impact; standards of work seen in lessons are now at least satisfactory and results from recent modular tests indicate that the school is well placed to meet the challenging targets it has set for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. Students' spiritual and moral development is satisfactory but their social and cultural development is good. Relationships are generally harmonious and a respect for others is central to the ethos of the school. Students of different ages, diverse cultures and various backgrounds participate well together, whether on a theatre trip, residential visit or sporting activity. The majority of students enjoy coming to school, attend well and participate in extra-curricular activities. Attendance has improved through a system of rigorous monitoring and support but remains below average because of persistent poor attendance by a significant minority. Inspectors agree with the school that behaviour is satisfactory. Behaviour around the school and in most observed lessons where

teachers have clear strategies for managing students is good. However, poor behaviour by a minority of students is a concern especially in some lessons when it hinders progress. Students feel safe from bullying as a result of good care and support. They adopt healthy lifestyles because sports college status ensures that physical activity has a high profile in the school. They make good contributions to the school community through their involvement in drama and musical productions and fundraising activities. The work of the school council is exemplary; students take their responsibilities seriously and they have been effective in influencing many school decisions. Although basic skills are low, students are well prepared for the future by the careers and work-related programmes and other interventions, including assertive mentoring.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning within the secondary phase are satisfactory with much that is good or better. Teaching and learning within the sixth form are good although issues around attendance and the loss of learning time impacts on achievement. In the best lessons students make good progress because lessons are well planned and they provide a well structured range of interesting activities which meet the needs of most students. Teachers rightly focus on improving literacy across all lessons, they use questioning well to tease out full responses and effectively manage behaviour. In the satisfactory lessons behaviour management is less effective particularly where a minority of students are initially reluctant to engage with the lesson. In a number of subject areas assessment, including the marking of work, is good. Teachers celebrate achievements in a variety of ways, promote self-assessment and provide students with their next steps in learning; for example, 'I need to extend my responses by making reference to the sources'. However, in some subject areas the use of assessment information and data is more limited, and as a result students are unclear what they need to do to improve. Specialist status makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning across the school with staff from the school's specialist areas very much leading the learning. They role model best practice, support whole school training and work within other subject areas. More importantly, the specialist status does much to motivate and engage students, particularly those at risk of underachieving.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum within the secondary phase and the sixth form is good. The foundation programme in Year 7 eases the transition from primary school, ensuring that students make the best possible start. Year 8 students benefit from the 'step up' programme and in Year 9, students engage in various programmes after they have sat their standard attainment tests. Across the curriculum, there is a rightful emphasis on literacy. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum is effective in meeting the needs, interests and aspirations of the vast majority of students. Older students, at risk of disengaging from school, follow their own personalised learning programmes. These include a diverse range of occupational, vocational and recreational programmes and lead to certification and accreditation as well as promoting life skills, raising self-esteem and for some students, improving their attendance quite markedly. The sixth form offers a broad and balanced curriculum and includes an access course, which is a very important

route into further education for some students and provides a springboard to higher qualifications. The school's specialist subjects have enhanced the curriculum particularly in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles. A strong partnership with Bradford Bulls enhances provision. There is a good range of and take up for the enrichment activities on offer, particularly sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Child protection systems are well established and secure. Safety checks on new staff meet statutory requirements. The pastoral system has been reorganised recently and brings together both academic and pastoral staff to support students' needs. Processes for academic monitoring are in place but there is inconsistency of practice across some curriculum areas. Nevertheless, it is increasingly effective in identifying those at risk of underperformance or disengagement. Staff work effectively within school and with external agencies to support all students. There is high quality care for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through the learning support unit and the attachment of teaching assistants to subject areas. The recently introduced 'vertical' tutor groups, comprising students from all year groups, contributes further to the good support provided for students, encourages peer mentoring and raises self-esteem. Students make good use of the teenage information and advice centre. Careers advice is comprehensive. Strong links with the Connexions service has resulted in a reduction of the number of students not in education, employment or training, although the school recognises the number is still too high.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, complemented well by a very experienced senior team, including the sixth form leadership, has steered the school through a difficult year. Recent setbacks have interrupted the rising trend of improvement, but they have not blunted the senior leaders' determination to ensure that every student achieves as well as they can. The governing body makes a significant contribution to the school; they are knowledgeable, appropriately challenging and equally supportive. The school's self-evaluation is perceptive and accurate in identifying weaknesses, but a little modest when assessing strengths. It is used well as a tool for further improvement. The monitoring of teaching and learning is both supportive and robust, highlighting very clearly both good practice and areas for development. The leadership of several departments, including sport, is very effective. However, the quality of leadership at middle management level across the school is uneven in a few areas, particularly where there are new members of staff. The school has identified this issue and provides extensive support and opportunities for development and this is having a good impact. The school has taken full advantage of the opportunities offered through its specialist school status. Resources are deployed well and the school gives good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Tong School, Westgate Hill Street, Bradford, BD4 6NR

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed our visit and your views were very helpful to us. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you liked your teachers and the headteacher as well. We were able to visit some of your lessons and we looked at your work. We agree with your headteacher that the education at Tong school is satisfactory and we found many good features. Here is a summary of our findings:

- staff at the school care about you and provide good support and guidance
- your school is well led; we think your headteacher is an excellent leader - she is very clear about how to move the school forward so that it gets better. The senior leaders are good too and support the headteacher very well
- the staff work very hard as a team to help make the school an enjoyable place to learn
- the range of subjects and courses is good; you told us that you especially like the sports and performing arts subjects
- most of you behave well and respect the culture of others, and this creates a harmonious environment. However, we found, and you told us as well, that some poor behaviour disrupts your lessons
- although some of you have good attendance there are too many students who do not attend school regularly. There are some parents who may allow you to have time off when you don't need to
- your results in tests and examinations are low, but mostly they have improved from last year, except in some subjects including science
- you make satisfactory progress during your time at school
- lessons are fine and some are more interesting than others
- we think the school really tries hard to give you a say in what happens in the school and we were impressed with the work of the school council.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to work on the following points:

- raise standards, especially in science
- improve attendance
- ensure that teachers use assessment to help you understand what you need to do to improve your work.

We feel confident the school can do this. Your teachers work hard and give up a lot of time to help you. You can play your part by continuing to have positive attitudes and making sure you attend school.