

Toot Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122865
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	327813
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1113
Sixth form	246
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barrie Thomas
Headteacher	Mr John Tomasevic
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 March 2006
School address	The Banks Bingham Nottinghamshire NG13 8BL
Telephone number	01949 875550
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large, popular and over-subscribed school which is situated in the town of Bingham. Many students travel from quite far reaching rural areas to attend. Students enter with standards that are above average. Almost all of them speak English as their first language and the vast majority are of White British heritage. An above average percentage of students has learning difficulties and/or disabilities although a below average percentage has a statement of special educational needs. The school was re-designated as a specialist school for Visual Arts and Business and Enterprise in 2007. This followed its Specialist School Trust award for being the most improved specialist school in 2006. It became an Enterprise hub school in 2006. The school achieved the Healthy Status Gold award in 2007. It has been awarded Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark Gold and has Quality in Study Support status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Toot Hill School provides its students with a good quality of education. The school has moved forward well in several aspects of its work since the last inspection, in its determination to be the best that it can be. In particular, the quality of its specialist school provision is having a positive impact on students' wider development as well as their standards. The headteacher's clear vision has led to a very relevant agenda for improvement, which staff work effectively to achieve. The systems in place and their good impact, particularly the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of students' academic performance, reflect the good overall leadership and management of the school. Very loyal governors, who oversee the school's work effectively, add to its good capacity for further improvement.

The headteacher is right in describing the school as, 'being on a journey'. This is particularly so in the good progress and achievement of students of all abilities. In particular the progress of boys, which was satisfactory in 2008, is now good. This is as a result of a range of initiatives, notably the outstanding curriculum and support for those students who find learning difficult. The good quality of teaching and learning is instrumental in the good progress of students and the well above average standards that students attain by the end of Year 11. Relationships between students and staff are a real strength. Teachers' secure subject knowledge, coupled with good lesson structure and opportunities for students to learn for themselves, make lessons positive experiences. However, whilst consistent teaching practices are in place in most classes, some lessons do not focus regularly enough on ensuring students' learning is underpinned by consistently high expectations and challenge.

The excellent curriculum, which takes into account individual students' learning needs increasingly well, is stimulating their interest in learning and contributing to their good personal development. Students speak of the benefits of grouping by ability and the new programmes of study through Key Stage 3. The thoughtful development of Key Stage 4 courses is catering far more effectively for students' interests and aspirations. The range of partnerships enjoyed by the school, many of which are a result of the school's specialist status, broaden students' learning experiences substantially. They are part of their good preparation for employment and further and higher education.

Students value their school and their place there. The school demonstrates its commitment to the all-round development of students by the good personal development it provides, with students, for example, showing a good understanding of how to live healthily and safely, and behaving well during the inspection. It acknowledges that students do not have enough of a voice in influencing the direction of the school through the school council, although they are articulate ambassadors. A significant minority of parents express their desire for improved communication, and for involvement in school developments and proposed changes to be built into school practice. The effectiveness of arrangements to care for students and to support and guide them, both pastorally and academically, are excellent.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides students with a good education and increasingly attracts students both from the school and from the surrounding area. Standards in A-level courses are in line with those nationally, reflecting the good progress most students make in their courses from their variable starting points in the inclusive sixth form. Teaching is good with some particular strengths. Work is challenging and lessons focus clearly on examination requirements. The best practice supports students in developing independent learning skills. Teaching also provides useful feedback to students on their progress and how they can improve. Relationships between students and their teachers are extremely positive and students value the very high quality mentoring and support they receive. The curriculum is good. A wide range of GCSE A and AS level courses are offered but the range of vocational courses is not yet as broad. Students' personal development and attitudes to work are outstanding and their enjoyment, personal ambition and determination play a significant part in their progress. They are active in community work, contribute well to college life and act as very good role models for other students. Students are actively involved in mentoring and supporting younger students in different activities.

The sixth form is led and managed well and senior leaders give clear direction to its work. The school has worked hard to establish strong procedures for tracking and supporting students' progress. Many students go on to further and higher education, with the retention rate of students who progress from Year 12 to 13, being very good. Students' experiences are enriched through very effective partnerships, which help students to be well prepared for their future lives.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on the quality of students' learning, in particular, the level of challenge and expectations, in order to accelerate further students' progress.
- Develop the role and effectiveness of the school council, so that students play an increasingly active part in the development of their school.
- Build more regular involvement and consultation with parents into school practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and the school's detailed tracking of their standards demonstrate that all groups of students are making good progress and achieving well through the school. This represents a move forward from the 2008 examination results, which showed that girls' progress through the school was good but boys' progress was satisfactory. Boys' progress is being effectively addressed by a range of strategies, bringing about accelerated progress.

The school's evidence points to a further rise in GCSE results in 2009 and targets being met. The percentage attaining 5+ A* to C passes in 2008 has been well above average for the last three years, including in English and mathematics. A higher percentage of girls than boys reached the highest levels in 2008 although school data points to this not being the case in 2009. The percentage attaining two A* to C

grades in science is also well above the national average, demonstrating good improvement since the last inspection. However, students' performance in modern foreign languages (MFL) was below the national average. Performance in specialist status subjects shows that students significantly exceed national averages at expected and higher levels in Art and Design. Business Studies results in 2008 were above average at single applied award level.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are happy and responsible members of the school. Most students enjoy coming to school as their above average attendance levels show. Behaviour is generally good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. It is reflected in the harmonious relationships within the school community and in the respect that students show for the views and values of others. It leads to them feeling safe in school. Opportunities for spiritual growth are developed well in some lessons but are inconsistently planned in others. Students actively choose healthy options from the catering menu, and appreciate the wide range of physical activities available to them. Participation rates are good. Many students make a strong contribution to the life of the school through such schemes as the mentor programme for younger students in the 'toe-to-toe' reading programme. They engage very well with the local and global community through the theatre and charities, and through good links with children in South Africa and India. However, although staff put the students first, the school council is under-developed and does not give students a genuine voice in school improvement. They have responded well to the opportunities provided by enterprise days and work experience, which contribute effectively to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching closely reflects the good practice promoted by the school's teaching and learning policy, which has resulted in a growing proportion of good and outstanding teaching. The three-part lesson is well established and enjoyable starters quickly engage students. Students know what is expected of them, and learning objectives are routinely shared at the start of each lesson. Because relationships are good, students are confident learners whose positive attitudes contribute to the generally good progress they make in lessons. They ask questions as well as answer them, and work effectively and independently in pairs and small groups. Lesson planning generally caters well for the range of students' needs but sometimes there is too little challenge in some lessons. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and teaching is often enthusiastic, reflecting strong subject knowledge. Students' work is usually well presented, reflecting the emphasis staff place on them taking pride in their work. Marking is supportive but not consistently informative across the school, and the school has highlighted the need to improve it. However, in the most effective lessons, students are encouraged to evaluate their own learning as well as that of others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's new curriculum in Key Stage 3, which is combined with regular assessment of attainment, progress and attitudes, is accelerating students' progress. Students in Year 7 say how much they enjoy their learning in tiered groups, because it enables them to learn at the right pace for them. Additions to the Key Stage 4 curriculum have broadened provision, with a growing range of vocational courses being established. They have added richness to the variety of learning experiences and to students' enthusiasm. The impact of the school's specialist status in Business and Art is outstanding and supports the curriculum through high standards in these subjects and a range of accreditation and short courses. All departments evaluate creativity as part of their commitment to enterprise, enabling students to add an extra dimension to learning. Specialist status is particularly effective in extending the already impressive range of extra-curricular activity to include enrichment for students, adults, families and those with additional learning and social needs. Students through the school enjoy the wide variety of skills they can develop in physical education (PE) lessons, which are enhanced by the knowledge they develop through the strong personal, social and health education programme. It includes a relevant careers programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a strong commitment to inclusion by ensuring that students receive the support they need. Excellent liaison with a range of external agencies facilitates this as well as enabling staff, students and their parents to have access to expert advice. Multi-agency working is a particularly strong feature and rightly recognised in the local area. High quality pastoral support is greatly appreciated by students, who feel safe and well supported, particularly by their tutors. There are good arrangements to secure students' health, safety and welfare. The Learning Support Centre provides a calm and nurturing environment for vulnerable pupils, including those with additional learning needs. Good support ensures that the particular needs of these pupils are met well.

Guidance about options, post-16 choices and careers is timely and of good quality. Since the last inspection, academic guidance has been strengthened considerably. A more personalised guidance process has been developed based on regular checks of students' progress, target setting that reflects high expectations, and regular individual progress reviews that result in tailored interventions. This development has successfully accelerated students' progress. Students are clear about their target grades and have a growing awareness of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's focused vision and direction, and the effective support of the senior team, have resulted in a clear agenda for improvement, which is being implemented through carefully planned systems and procedures. Good impact is evident in many aspects of the school's work. It is excellent in the provision for specialist school status, and its links with primary schools. The great team spirit of the staff and their enthusiasm for moving the school forward, strengthen its work.

The significant impact on students of community cohesion owes much to the specialist school partnerships, locally, nationally and internationally, with students benefiting widely from working in partnership with those from different backgrounds, beliefs and cultures. Subject leaders are working effectively. Their tracking of students' work is increasingly rigorous and is important in the quickening progress of Key Stage 3 students, particularly boys. Governors are committed and involved, acting as effective critical friends. However, the school's self-evaluation is over-generous in some aspects.

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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?	2	2
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	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.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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 eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	



11 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Toot Hill School, Bingham, NG13 8BL

On behalf of the inspection team, I am writing to thank you for your cooperation and help during the recent inspection. We appreciated the opportunities to meet with you and to listen to your views about the school and its development. This letter will tell you the judgements that we made.

Toot Hill School is a good school, which provides you with an increasing number of interesting learning experiences. In particular, the excellent curriculum is organising learning in a way that is more beneficial to you and providing more courses to match your aspirations and interests. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. You make good progress through the school and progress through Key Stage 3 is now good. We were pleased to see that boys' progress through the school, which was satisfactory in 2008, is also now good. Teaching is good, including in the sixth form because teachers structure lessons well and involve you in your learning. However, we want lessons in Years 7 to 11 to concentrate more on how well you are learning, by ensuring the right level of challenge in your work. This will help you to make as much progress as possible. Targets are increasingly used in lessons to help you to focus on improvement.

The school works hard to help you to develop the skills that you need for a successful and fulfilled adulthood, by giving you numerous opportunities to be involved in school activities and to take on responsibilities. This is an excellent aspect of the sixth form. However, the school council is not having the chance to be enough of a voice in helping your school to move forward. You have a very good understanding of the need to live healthy lifestyles. The headteacher has been instrumental in the improvements made to your school and he and the staff work hard to move the school forward. The staff look after you very well and help you with whatever problems you have. Arrangements to help students who need specific support are excellent. The sixth form provides a good education and students make good progress through Years 12 and 13. They carry out sterling work in their support of younger students and in the community.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Lynne Blakelock
Lead inspector