

Toot Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136878
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	384806
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Mark Phillips 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1561
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barrie Thomas
Headteacher	John Tomasevic
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 55 lessons taught by 54 teachers, including five joint observations with senior staff. Meetings were held with three panels of students selected by the school, representatives of the governing body, and with middle and senior managers. Inspectors also looked at documentation including: the school's analysis of examination results, records of exclusion and inappropriate behaviour, and key policies for safeguarding, equalities, and community cohesion. In addition to the parental questionnaire, to which 249 replies were received, inspection questionnaires were also returned by 58 staff and 192 students.

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

- How consistent is students' progress throughout the school?
- What are the reasons for the apparent differences in students' performance at AS and A level?
- Is teaching consistently good, with enough excellent lessons across the school, for it to be judged outstanding?
- How effective is the direction given by senior leadership, particularly in teachers' continuing professional development?

Information about the school

Toot Hill School is a large school with specialisms in business and the arts. The sixth form is known locally as Toot Hill College. Most students are White British, with others coming from various minority ethnic heritages. Very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as are the proportions with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Following a brief consultation period, Toot Hill School converted to academy status in September 2011.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Toot Hill School provides an outstanding standard of education and care. Continued development over the past three years has resulted in improved examination results with high standards achieved by students, both overall and in English and mathematics. Achievement and progress are excellent overall, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All groups of students make at least good progress. There is outstanding progress in Key Stage 4, although this progress is not sustained throughout the sixth form. For two years, results have dipped at AS level; while final A level results are better, the inconsistencies in sixth form performance mean that sixth form provision is good, rather than outstanding. This is a key area for improvement.

In classrooms, students show excellent attitudes to learning and make the most of an outstanding, innovative curriculum, including an extended teaching day. Sophisticated 'tiering' arrangements help teachers and managers to provide appropriate courses and learning resources that meet individual needs and abilities very well indeed. The effectiveness of partnership work, development of skills relevant to students' future economic well-being, and the school's work in promoting equalities are also all outstanding.

Teaching is outstanding. There is a consistency of good practice across departments and across the school, which is remarkable given the size of the staff. Teachers are notably thorough in their lesson and resource preparation; objectives set at the start of each lesson show a very good understanding of how students learn effectively through developing both knowledge and skills. However, while formal assessment procedures are regular and thorough, in some lessons these are rather mechanical and are not always appropriate to the subject – particularly in Key Stage 3.

Many aspects of leadership and management are outstanding. There is a remarkable sense of shared drive and purpose that stems from the headteacher and senior leadership team and extends throughout the school. Together, managers have secured significant improvements over the past three years. The dedication of teaching staff and other adults in providing outstanding guidance and support is commendable. Another key reason why leadership is outstanding is because, alongside celebration of the schools' success, there is a realisation that there is still work to do. Provision for safeguarding is good. Students' sensible behaviour and staff vigilance regarding safeguarding matters do much to minimise potential risks; students feel exceptionally safe in the school, a view shared by their parents and

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carers. Improvements over the past three years, together with accurate self-evaluation of the school's work, indicate that there is outstanding capacity for further, sustained improvement; overall, the school provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students make outstanding progress during their time in the sixth form by:
 - increasing pass rates at AS level to above the national average
 - increasing the proportion of higher grades at A level in all subjects, to significantly above the national average.
- Developing formative assessment procedures, particularly in Key Stage 3, so that they are more closely tailored and appropriate to the way that individual subjects are taught and learnt.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students who join the school in Year 7 do so having attained generally above-average standards in their primary schools. Standards at the end of Year 11 have been consistently high overall for the past three years. In 2011, four out of every five students gained five good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics. Standards in the individual English, mathematics and science examinations were high; they were also high in modern languages. Although under a third of all students took a modern language qualification in 2011, curriculum changes mean that over 80% of all students are now taking French, Spanish, or German in Key Stage 4. There were very few subjects that did not perform as well; standards in business studies and economics were relatively weaker than in the rest of the curriculum, although greater proportions took these subjects than is usually the case. The school's comprehensive tracking system suggests that current Year 11 students are on track to achieve extremely well in their examinations; work seen during the inspection showed that students enjoy learning, are diligent and apply themselves very well in class, producing work to a high standard, particularly in Key Stage 4. An important reason why achievement is outstanding is because all groups achieve very well, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Standards for these groups are consistently high, compared to the standards reached by similar students nationally.

Classroom behaviour is excellent and attendance is high; students take full responsibility for their progress and are almost always keen to succeed. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. However, the school's records show that there is a small minority of students who do not always respect the school's high expectations for good manners around the school site and, consequently, require temporary exclusion. As a result, behaviour is good, rather than outstanding.

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Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of students feel very safe in the school, and parents and carers confirm this view.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding, overall, because it is consistently good throughout the school, with a significant amount outstanding. A common strength of all lessons is the way that teachers plan on three levels – the knowledge that they expect students to learn, the understanding that they expect them to develop, and the activities that they will undertake in order to acquire this knowledge and understanding. In an outstanding Year 10 drama lesson, for example, students deepened their understanding of Stanislavski's method of acting through a skilful blend of high-level, concise teacher presentation and a variety of practical tasks. Teachers' professionalism in preparing high-quality resources is another characteristic of lessons throughout the school. However, while they are similarly diligent in making regular assessments of students' work, these do not always suit the unique nature of each subject. This is particularly the case where there is mechanical and too-frequent use of National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 lessons, particularly in subjects such as music or modern languages where curriculum time is more limited than in, for example, English, mathematics or science.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is so well suited and adapted to the individual needs of all students. The large size of each year group means that the school is able to employ a sophisticated system of 'tiering', where students are

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

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arranged into groups and put onto courses that meet their abilities and interests exactly. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has a comprehensive range of academic and vocational options that students can mix and match to suit their needs. An innovative approach to timetabling means that students receive around three hours additional teaching time each week, and the length of lessons can be varied to suit the demands of different subjects. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. While these are generally well attended, not enough is done to monitor participation by students in, for example, music, drama and extra-curricular sport.

Particularly good care, guidance and support are offered to students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. For example, one student spoke to inspectors about how a combination of good teaching and good individual support had turned around his academic performance and social outlook since joining the school at the start of Year 11. There are excellent links with external agencies to support students' development and well-established links with primary schools to ease transition to Year 7.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher sets exceptionally high expectations for both staff and students. He is supported by a strong extended senior leadership team. Systems for monitoring, analysing and evaluating students' academic performance and the quality of teaching are very strong. A key reason for the school's success is the support given to staff through continuing professional development (CPD), including through links with Nottingham University. As part of the extended school day, staff have CPD time written into their timetables, as well as personal, preparation and administration (PPA) time.

While staff also work hard to provide students with a good range of opportunities to learn about and understanding their own and other communities and cultures, the strategic planning of this work is not as strong as that in other areas of the school's work. Similarly, while the effectiveness of the school's promotion of equalities is outstanding because different groups of students achieve equally well, the governing body's strategies for monitoring and reporting the work of different groups are not formal enough. As both of these are the responsibility of the governing body, governance is good rather than outstanding, notwithstanding the considerable efforts made by governors in supporting the school's change to academy status.

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Safeguarding arrangements are good; while procedures for checking and thorough vetting of staff and other adults are very thorough, there are areas of the school site and buildings that are ageing and which are in constant need of repair in order to prevent accidents. The school works hard and effectively to maintain these to a satisfactory condition.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Sixth form

Students who join Toot Hill College, from the main school or from other institutions, do so having attained similar standards in their GCSEs as other sixth form students nationally. Results at the end of the A-level and vocational two-year courses are generally above average, but not significantly so. This includes the highest grades, which would need to be consistently and significantly above average for progress to be outstanding, rather than good. Another important reason why progress is not outstanding is because of significantly weaker AS-level results. Provisional data from the 2011 examinations show that around one fifth of all AS level entries did not achieve a pass grade, a similar picture to 2010, a proportion higher than the national average. The school suggested reasons for this, including students’ reduced efforts with their weaker courses, so that they could concentrate on the subjects that they wished to continue to A level. Senior leaders also pointed, correctly, to the school’s good track record of students’ succeeding in their university applications. There are other aspects of the outcomes achieved by sixth form students, such as the contribution that many make to their school community, that are very strong. However, the dip in the school’s overall performance at AS level shows clearly the inconsistency in achievement through the sixth form and, indeed, an inconsistency in students’ attitudes that does not support the college’s self-evaluation that overall outcomes in the sixth form are outstanding.

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Sixth form provision is good; while it is commendable that the school operates an 'open admissions' policy, this strategy is not so positive when students do not pass their courses, as is the case with some AS-level entries. Otherwise, students rightly speak very highly of the support that they receive from their tutors, overall during their time in the sixth form and in making university applications. The school recognises that securing bespoke accommodation for the sixth form is an area of priority, although it is also very positive that sixth form students integrate very well with the main school.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are good, enabling students to achieve good outcomes. However, self-evaluation is too generous.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

In addition to the inspection questionnaires received, inspectors were sent a number of compelling emails of praise for the school's work with individual students, including those with special educational needs and the most able. Inspection evidence supported these views. The area of most concern to parents and carers was the extent to which the school promotes healthy lifestyles; this was also the biggest concern to students, amongst an otherwise similarly positive response. The inspectors found that the promotion of healthy lifestyles is good, as the school states in its self-evaluation.

A few parents and carers also voiced concerns about the effectiveness of communications between school and the home. The school website is kept up to date with useful information and regular updates are sent home about students' progress, but inspection evidence shows that not enough is done to ensure that information has reached parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Toot Hill School 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 249 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1561 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	133	53	103	41	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	132	53	110	44	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	124	50	114	46	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	137	55	98	39	8	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	121	49	118	47	1	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	89	36	131	53	13	5	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	81	33	145	58	17	7	2	1
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)	103	41	110	44	7	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	120	48	114	46	6	2	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	117	47	110	44	5	2	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	80	32	131	53	10	4	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	144	58	91	37	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	155	62	86	35	4	2	1	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



9 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Toot Hill School, Nottingham NG13 8BL

I am writing to let you know the results of our recent inspection of your school and to thank you and your parents and carers for the part that you played, particularly by speaking and writing to us. Thank you for the part you play in making Toot Hill an outstanding school. Your high attendance, excellent attitudes to work, and good behaviour provide the right conditions for learning and, indeed, help your teachers to make the most of their expertise. You are fortunate to have access to an outstanding curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support. Overall, the school's leaders and managers have a very clear vision for you and your school, with expectations for high standards in your work and personal development.

One of the reasons why the school is outstanding is because Mr Tomsasevic and his team realise that 'outstanding' does not mean 'perfect', and they recognise that there is more work to be done before every aspect of the school's work is at the highest level. The overall grade for the sixth form is 'good', rather than 'outstanding' because there is too much variability in the examination results. The AS-level results need to be improved, in particular. We have also asked your teachers to think more carefully about how they use National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3, to better match the individual characteristics of different subjects.

Overall, though, there is a great deal to celebrate at Toot Hill School. I wish you every success in the 2012 examinations and beyond and, once again, my congratulations.

Yours sincerely

Mark Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector

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