

Trinity School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137369
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	386097
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
Lead inspector	Jean Kendall HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
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	1,729
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Armstrong
Headteacher	Alan Mottershead
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jean Kendall	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional inspector
Naomi Taylor	Additional inspector
Peter Eeva	Additional inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Teaching and learning were observed in 65 lessons including 17 in the sixth form; 61 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, quality assurance documentation and improvement planning. They took account of the 282 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 736 from students and 97 from staff.

Information about the school

Trinity School is a much larger than average size secondary school with a large sixth form. It has specialist language college status and converted to an academy in September 2011. An extensive building programme is under way and much of the new accommodation is already in use. A smaller than average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below average. A few students are in the care of the local authority. The school has a resourced provision for hearing impaired students, with six currently on roll. A small number of students are from minority ethnic communities. The school has a number of accredited awards including Artsmark and the Healthy School status. In 2011, 66% of students attained 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, which is well above the current floor standard of 35%.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Trinity School is a good school. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have high ambitions for students. They are determined in their pursuit of excellence, with clear action plans based on accurate self-evaluation. Staff share their ambition. Collectively, they provide the school with a strong capacity for further improvement.
- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. It is underpinned by a broad curriculum, effective teamwork and constructive contributions by students.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress at GCE AS and A level and in other courses. Attainment has risen and was above average in 2011. This is because teaching is consistently good and students are motivated to achieve highly.
- Students make good progress from their starting points to achieve standards that are significantly above average at GCSE and in the sixth form.
- The school has a very positive ethos and a supportive learning environment. 'Students are happy, settled and enjoy all aspects of school life', and 'teachers bring out the best in students' are typical comments from parents and carers.
- All students are known personally by their teachers, support staff, senior leaders and the headteacher, who takes a keen interest in their well-being and achievement.
- Exemplary behaviour modelled by staff has a positive impact on that of students. Behaviour around the school is very good, maintaining an orderly and safe environment. Behaviour is good in the large majority of lessons. There are rare occasions when the behaviour of a few students interrupts the learning of others but school leaders are dealing with this. Behaviour gets better as students get older and settle into the Trinity way of life.
- Teachers are dedicated and keen to share best practice. Most teaching is very well matched to students' needs but there is a small minority that is less effective because activities are not precisely matched to ensure challenge or support appropriate to

ability. Less effective lessons tend to be dominated by the teacher talking to students for too long, giving them limited opportunities to work on longer tasks independently.

- There are some excellent examples in marking, where comments are evaluative, give clear guidance and lead to improvement on students' subsequent pieces of work. However students are not consistently pressed by teachers to act on improvement points.
- Key literacy and numeracy skills are promoted very effectively in some subjects, such as English and physical education (PE). School leaders are keen to build on this and ensure they are promoted effectively across all subject areas.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the best practice in teaching and use of assessment data so that students of all abilities make the most rapid progress they can by:
 - ensuring lessons take full account of students' prior learning and match activities precisely to their learning needs
 - making sure students have opportunities to act on good quality marking to improve their work
 - increasing opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning through independent and collaborative activities
 - build on the work started to promote key literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Main Report

Achievement of students

Students make good progress in the large majority of lessons, in both the main school and the sixth form. They make the most rapid progress in lessons where activities are precisely matched to differing ability levels within the class. For example, a Year 11 English lesson supported students very effectively in improving their skills to analyse spoken English, with targeted questioning and activities that built on their prior learning.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similarly good progress to their peers. They make the most rapid gains in individual and small group support sessions which also support their personal development. They make mostly good progress in lessons although the extent to which learning support assistants are involved in planning varies. Students with a hearing impairment are integrated into lessons effectively so they achieve well.

Most students start at the school with attainment that is usually in line with or above average. They make expected or better progress than all pupils nationally to attain significantly higher than average results at GCSE. The proportion attaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics is rising and was significantly above average in 2011. Students attain higher than average grades in many other subjects, including sciences, modern foreign languages, humanities and design and technology. Sixth form performance

at GCE A and AS levels has significantly improved in the last three years. The percentage of students attaining A*-B grades was above average in 2011. Most parents and carers who returned questionnaires feel that their children make good progress and their needs are met well.

In 2011 some of the higher and lower ability students did not meet their target grades in GCSE mathematics. The school leadership team has a full understanding of the data and has consequently taken measures to address this. Tracking students' progress is effective. Overall, students make good progress in most mathematics lessons observed. Those needing more support make good progress in small groups. Additional support or individualised programmes are used well to accelerate progress for students who are at risk of falling behind. Specific programmes are also in place to assist higher ability students to meet their challenging targets.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good in the large majority of lessons and there is some that is outstanding. This ensures that most students and groups of students achieve well over time. Good teaching is supported by teachers' strong subject knowledge, clear explanation and effective questioning skills. Teachers make good use of technology to support teaching and add interest to lessons. Supportive and encouraging relationships permeate the school so students grow in confidence and are keen to contribute to lessons. When given the opportunity to take responsibility for collaborative or independent tasks, students rise to the challenge and become immersed in their learning. This was seen in an excellent Year 13 lesson in arts management, where students worked highly effectively as a team, to create a set design. Similarly, in a Year 7 science lesson, students thoroughly enjoyed investigating how heat travels and made great strides in their knowledge and understanding.

In the most effective lessons, teachers use a range of strategies to sustain pace and interest. They very effectively assess students' knowledge and skills, plan activities that develop them at a rapid pace and provide timely, useful feedback to further learning. Activities and questioning are appropriately matched to students' ability to ensure all make rapid progress. In the small minority of lessons that are less effective, the needs of different groups are not fully met in the delivery of the lesson. There are missed opportunities to consolidate learning and develop students' literacy and numeracy skills in meaningful contexts. Such lessons characteristically demand too much passive listening by students. In a small minority of lessons, ineffective classroom management and low-level disruption slows progress. Most students take pride in their work although presentation can vary according to the expectation of their teacher. However, students make good progress in most lessons and this is reflected in the questionnaire returns from parents and carers. A large majority rightly feel that their children are taught well. They referred to 'dedicated and hard working staff' who 'always encourage children to do their best'.

Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Sixth form students have extremely positive attitudes to their work and understand the importance of their time at school. This means that teaching can progress at a lively pace and students rise to the high expectations their teachers set for them.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students choose to behave well and show pride in their school. They have a positive attitude to learning, are respectful and highly motivated to achieve well. Behaviour is mostly good in lessons although there are rare occasions when minor disruptive behaviour by a small number of students interrupts the learning of others. This is a concern voiced by a small minority of parents, carers and students who returned questionnaires. When behaviour does disrupt learning it is usually dealt with effectively. Students have a good understanding of the behaviour code and most do their best to uphold it.

New students are welcomed into both the main school and the sixth form and soon settle into routines. The 'House' system provides a strong sense of community and support. Students are orderly and polite when in shared areas and when moving around the school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe, particularly where there are building works on the school site. Their considerate behaviour, together with strong pastoral support from staff, helps students to feel safe. The questionnaire returns from parents and carers and students reflect this, with 96% of parents and carers agreeing that their children feel safe and 88% of students feeling safe most or all of the time. Students report that bullying is rare and dealt with well if it should occur. They have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and feel confident to seek support if they need to. Very few parents and carers expressed concern about bullying. Students in the sixth form are cooperative, approachable and provide excellent role models for younger students. They are always willing to help younger students, for example supporting Year 7 students with reading and investigative work.

Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive good support to help them cope with difficulties. Parents and carers comments endorse this, stating that the school is 'excellent in supporting individual needs including behaviour challenges' and that 'individualised support has helped their child cope'. The school works closely with external agencies and families to ensure students get the most out of school, keep attending and avoid exclusion. Fixed-term exclusion is reducing as a result although it is still above average. A staged approach to reintegration is successful in helping students get back on track when they have been excluded or absent due to difficulties. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last three years. Attendance is broadly average. It dipped for a small group of students in 2011 including those known to be entitled to free school meals in Year 11. That attendance is improving and the school has appointed an attendance officer to work with families, particularly within target groups.

Leadership and management

Senior leaders have high expectations and relentlessly pursue their vision for excellence. Their drive for improvement is supported by accurate self-evaluation, good performance management and well-targeted professional development. Quality assurance procedures for departmental improvement are well established and include annual observations of teaching, work sampling, scrutiny of planning and discussion with students. These procedures are consistently applied although there is some variability between departments in the depth of analysis. The best examples are firmly focused on students' learning and progress and the most successful teaching strategies. Less effective examples are more focused on the deployment of resources. Departmental links with senior leaders provide senior leaders with a good overview of the whole school so they can identify best practice and plan effective professional development to improve teaching and learning.

Quality assurance procedures are underpinned with detailed analysis of students' progress and attainment. This enables leaders to plan effective support for students who need additional academic help and those who have behaviour difficulties. Equality of opportunity is promoted well by all staff, so that the attainment gap between different groups is closing. Students entitled to free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority, make similar progress to these groups nationally. Discrimination is tackled effectively. The school's track record of improvement shows that it has strong capacity to sustain further improvement.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and well designed to meet students' needs. Students achieve high standards in the English Baccalaureate subject areas and the academic curriculum is supplemented by appropriate vocational courses. Extra-curricular provision and effective partnership working with local schools, college and community organisations increase the range and quality of learning opportunities. Students receive good advice and guidance to support them into the next phase of their education and ensure their success. The sixth form curriculum has been modified to allow students to follow pathways programmes and there is effective support to ensure students fulfil their potential. The retention rate in the sixth form has improved as a result.

The governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development based on effective self-evaluation. They provide good challenge and support to school leaders. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements, including those to ensure safe recruitment of staff. Child-protection procedures are very thorough. The school works with a wide range of agencies to ensure students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are safeguarded and supported. Parents and carers are full of praise for the school's general pastoral systems, stating that students can 'always get help and support if needed' and reporting that the 'caring attitude' of staff helps them settle well. Staff set excellent examples to promote moral and social skills. Students have a keen sense of moral rectitude and are socially adept in a range of situations. Their cultural and spiritual development is a focus in many subjects and through the school's language specialism.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

3 February 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Trinity School, Carlisle, CA1 1JB

Thank you for your welcome and helpful contributions to the inspection on 1-2 February 2012. Inspectors found Trinity School to be a good school with a strong capacity for further improvement. These are our main findings.

- Your school has a very positive ethos and a supportive learning environment. You play an important part in this through your considerate behaviour and hard work in lessons.
- You make good progress in your learning to achieve standards that are significantly above average at GCSE and in the sixth form.
- Teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. It is underpinned by a broad curriculum, effective teamwork and purposeful leadership.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have high ambitions for you. Teachers know students very well and your headteacher takes a keen interest in your well-being and achievement.
- Most of you behave well. Your behaviour in communal areas and moving around the school is very good, keeping the school orderly and safe. However, on rare occasions the behaviour of a few students interrupts the learning of others and this is a concern voiced by some of you and your parents and carers.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the quality of education and pastoral support you receive. 'The school is welcoming, so students are happy, settled and enjoying all aspects of school life', and 'teachers bring out the best in students' are typical comments.

Teachers are dedicated and keen to share best practice to improve lessons. There are a few areas for improvement we agreed with your school:

- to ensure all activities are matched precisely to your learning needs
- to give you opportunities to act on good quality marking to improve your work
- increase opportunities for you to take responsibility for your learning
- promote key literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

We would like to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall

Her Majesty's Inspector, on behalf of the inspection team

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