

# Tuxford School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 122882           |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Nottinghamshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 327817           |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 7 May 2009       |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Martin Cragg HMI |

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

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|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Comprehensive                                          |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                                              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–19                                                  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                                  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |                                                        |
| School (total)                            | 1357                                                   |
| Sixth form                                | 208                                                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr John Rolph                                          |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr Christopher Pickering and Geoff Lloyd               |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 17 May 2006                                            |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Marnham Road<br>Tuxford<br>Nottinghamshire<br>NG22 0JH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01777 870001                                           |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01777 872155                                           |

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|--------------------------|------------|
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector in one day.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The school's evidence and evaluation to support judgements on current students' standards and progress, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- The effectiveness of the school's provision in identifying, supporting and raising the achievement of students who make slow progress or who are vulnerable.
- The consistency and rigour of the school's self-evaluation process and evidence which demonstrates that this brings about improvement.

Evidence was gathered through discussions with senior leaders, other staff, students, representatives of the school forum, the chair of governors and a local authority officer, together with visits to lessons and review of school documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average, with a large sixth form. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is low. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. Few students have a statement of educational needs but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school moved into new buildings in 2007 and works closely with another secondary school under the leadership of an executive headteacher. It also works in a partnership with local primary schools. It has had Technology specialist status since 2002 and Training School status since 2007. It has achieved the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark Gold Awards and Investors in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Tuxford is an outstanding school which has improved markedly since its last inspection in 2006. Parents commented favourably on the 'excellent support and encouragement' for students and the 'impressive staff commitment'. Care, guidance and support are excellent and students confirmed that 'everyone is treated as an individual'. This is a key strength of the school and, as a result, students make outstanding progress in their learning.

The standards reached by students have improved consistently. In 2008, they were well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and exceptionally high in science. The school has established a very thorough system for recording and tracking students' assessments, including externally validated results. This is used to evaluate their progress regularly, to identify any concerns and to agree an appropriate response to improve their achievement. This data shows that there has been significant improvement for a range of students in Year 11 who had not been reaching their challenging targets. As a result of the strategies put in place to adjust their courses, provide support and specific additional teaching, they are now exceeding those targets and making excellent progress, with some achieving way beyond any expectation. The achievement of current students is outstanding, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's specialist subjects make a substantial contribution to the improvement in overall standards and progress, and provision in English has also improved distinctly since the last inspection.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lessons thoroughly, setting high expectations and matching objectives to students' attainment. The exceptional relationships in classes give students confidence and ensure that they work together very effectively. In the very best lessons, students are challenged to work independently, to think deeply and to take responsibility for their learning. Teachers use an excellent range of activities to make learning interesting and thus students make outstanding progress. Generally, lessons are organised well and teachers maintain a brisk pace. The use of assessment in learning is a priority for the school and it has improved dramatically since the last inspection. Students are confident in using grade or level criteria to assess their work and to identify what they need to improve. They know their targets and are motivated to achieve them. They take pride in their success. Teachers use a range of strategies to assist students in understanding how to make their work better and this links effectively to the wide range of interventions provided as part of the system for tracking their progress.

The curriculum is kept constantly under review and makes an excellent contribution to raising achievement. It has been broadened at all key stages to meet the wide range of students' needs and attainment, with more emphasis on vocational or applied courses and a greater concentration on developing skills and effective approaches to learning. The new buildings and specialist status have been used very effectively as a catalyst for change. Most impressive is the extensive flexibility and increasingly personalised curriculum provision for individuals, particularly those who are at risk of underachieving. Triggered by the constant review of progress, courses are adjusted, students are moved to more suitable accreditation such as BTec, and some are entered for examinations early so that they can focus on their weaker subjects. These individual pathways have contributed strongly to the significantly improved progress for current students, especially in Year 11. There is an excellent range of enrichment activities, events, trips and themed days which complement the curriculum and ensure that students gain experience outside lessons.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and show respect for each other. There are relatively few instances of bullying and students say that they are dealt with effectively and that they feel safe. This view is shared by the vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire. The excellent relationships in the school enable students to enjoy their learning and to succeed. They appreciate the system for recording their achievements leading to a series of rewards. Overall, community values are strong in this inclusive school which students happily describe as being like a 'family'. Behaviour is excellent and leads to very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance continues to improve and is well above average. Students have well-developed understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They make exemplary contributions to the school and local community, often leading and organising events. They have a good understanding of other cultures and there are effective links with schools in Poland, Brazil and Kenya, and lively charity work. Students increasingly contribute to the evaluation of the school's work through surveys and questionnaires and there is an active school forum. Students are associate governors and are encouraged to attend all meetings. The development of workplace skills is outstanding, with abundant opportunities for students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to demonstrate leadership and teamwork skills.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are outstanding. As noted by many parents, students' individual needs are identified and effective support put in place by a dedicated team of caring staff who are passionate about improving their achievement. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures met statutory requirements. As recorded earlier, the system for tracking students' progress is exemplary and there is very close integration of academic and pastoral needs, with prompt and highly successful action from the 'routes to success' team. Students with particular difficulties benefit from excellent liaison with a variety of external services and agencies. Students are well-informed about their achievement and progress towards their targets. They are confident that they know how to improve their work. There are excellent arrangements for supporting students at transition points, with parents especially complimentary about induction into Year 7 and the sixth form. Guidance is very effective in helping students to make appropriate choices, suited to their interests and attainment.

Outstanding leadership and management provide the school with a very clear direction and have ensured significant and continuous improvement. The systems for review and evaluation of the school's performance at all levels are excellent. This area, along with the tracking of students' progress, has been transformed since the last inspection and now represents exemplary practice. The school's priorities are strongly focused on raising students' achievement and improving the quality of their experience. The school sets very challenging targets for students and for its performance, often beyond those for the top 25% of schools nationally. The achievement of current students indicates that they are likely to be exceeded this year. The steps taken to improve the achievement of particularly vulnerable or underachieving students demonstrate the strong commitment to inclusion and equality of opportunity. There is an excellent sense of community in the school. The developing links with other cultures and communities globally are good, although they are less developed in the context of this country. Governors have an effective strategic vision for the school and review its progress carefully. There is a full range of detailed policies but some require more rigorous oversight. Links with other schools through the partnerships are excellent and have promoted better leadership and innovation. The school works well with other establishments, the community and businesses to improve students' experience and achievement. Many parents commented positively on the

school's responsiveness but a minority felt that their views were not sought and that they did not receive enough information about developments and how they would affect their children. Value for money is excellent and the upward trend in an already successful school shows excellent capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is good and improving steadily. In 2008, standards were broadly average and students made satisfactory progress. However, the school's detailed tracking of assessment data, including already accredited results, indicates that progress for current students is good and that standards are now above average. A good proportion of students transfer from Year 11 and the curriculum provided for them is exceptional in meeting individual needs. Applied and vocational subjects are successful and complement effective academic courses, allowing students to develop personalised combinations. Students' progress is tracked rigorously and results in increasingly personalised support to ensure progress. Guidance is outstanding and gives students confidence when moving on to the next stage of their education or into employment. Teaching is good and some is outstanding, leading to good progress. Students' personal development is excellent and they make an extremely positive contribution to the life of the school, frequently leading initiatives and providing support as peer mentors or reading buddies. They take great pride in their school. Leadership and management are good, based on accurately identified areas for development which are rapidly delivering improvement.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend students' awareness and understanding across the curriculum of the elements of different faiths and cultures in the United Kingdom to promote community cohesion further.
- Improve communication with parents to ensure they are better informed and to seek their views about the school's innovations and development.



## 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 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------|

## Overall effectiveness

|                                                                                                                                                   |     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 1   | 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                                                                                                   | 1   | 1   |

## Achievement and standards

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

|                                                                                                               |   |   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>                          | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles                                                         | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices                                                             | 1 |   |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education                                                            | 1 |   |
| The attendance of learners                                                                                    | 1 |   |
| The behaviour of learners                                                                                     | 1 |   |
| 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 | 1 |   |

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

|                                                                                                                                              |     |     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   |     |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards                                                              | 1   |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation                                                                                            | 1   | 1   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated                                                                   | 1   |     |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?                                                                                   | 2   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money                                          | 1   |     |
| 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  |     |

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

8 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Tuxford School, Tuxford, Nottinghamshire NG22 0JH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we inspected your school. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke to in lessons, in meetings and around the school.

We found that your school has improved significantly and provides you with an outstanding education. You told us that there is a strong sense of community in the school and that you feel safe. The strong relationships in the school, linked to the very effective system for tracking your achievement, have ensured that your learning and progress are excellent. Your teachers prepare you well and set high expectations. Your behaviour in classes and towards each other is generally excellent. The curriculum is broad and provides you with excellent choice in Years 10, 11 and the sixth form. You benefit from flexible arrangements in grouping and courses to ensure that you are successful. There is also extremely effective support to help you learn, both in class and out of lesson time. You take on a wide range of activities, including opportunities to show leadership skills and help younger students. The sixth form are particularly successful in this. Overall, the standards achieved by students last year were above average and they were broadly average in the sixth form. The assessment information presented by the school indicates that you are making even better progress and that you are likely to meet your targets and raise those standards further this year.

I have asked the school to look at some areas for development:

- You understand your school and the local community well, but you could be more aware through the curriculum of different faiths and cultures elsewhere in this country.
- Some of your parents did not feel that the school explained changes that were being made or sought their views. We have asked the school to improve communication so that parents better understand the way the school works and can respond to proposed changes.

I am sure that your school will continue to improve. I wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector