

Turton High School Media Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105253
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	287174
Inspection dates	24 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1,668
School	1,234
6 th form	434
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Julian Page
Headteacher	Mr John Porteous
Date of previous school inspection	February 2003
School address	Bromley Cross Road Bromley Cross Bolton Lancashire BL7 9LT
Telephone number	01204 333233
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large and oversubscribed school is situated on the edge of Bolton and has been a specialist media arts college since 2001. The school has its own film studio and has taken part in several television programmes in relation to its educational activities. Students are from a wide range of backgrounds but a significant number come from families with experience of higher education. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and those with statements of special educational need is below average but increasing. There are more students in public care than in any other school in this local authority. Most students in the main school are of White British heritage but there is a large number from minority ethnic backgrounds in the sixth form. Turton High was awarded Healthy School status in March of this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school in which students' personal development and the care, guidance and support provided for them are outstanding. 'What you put in, you will get out!' is its byword and students in Year 7 are introduced to the significance of this statement as soon as they arrive. They settle quickly into their new school and parents comment, 'The transition to Turton has not only been a painless process for our children, it has been an absolute pleasure for us too!'

The school believes that nothing is ever perfect and improvements can always be made. For this reason, it underestimates the quality of some aspects of its provision. Media Arts College status has a significant impact on several areas of its work, particularly in relation to the expansion of the curriculum: the opportunities students have to make films and work with the national media do much to raise their self-confidence and they speak highly of the many trips abroad in which they share their musical and sporting talents with other young people.

Leadership and management are good and senior leaders are concerned to develop their students both personally and academically. They encourage students and staff to express their opinions for the good of the school and students themselves recognise the high esteem in which their teachers hold them. Standards are well above average and rising, as a result of good teaching and teachers' effective use of data to set targets. There are insufficient opportunities for students to use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for their personal research. Nonetheless, students achieve well across the school and individuals are aware of their level of progress and what they need to do to maintain and even improve it. They respond eagerly to the many rewards for effort and are delighted when their classmates succeed.

'Voices Out Loud' (VOL) are students elected to represent the views of their peers and their work plays a seminal role in many aspects of school. The healthy schools working party, for example, has written and introduced a school travel plan and the water fountains and floodlit AstroTurf pitch are the result of VOL deliberations. Peer mediators, prefects and student mentors also have a positive effect on students' enjoyment of school and ensure that bullying is rare but, when it does occur, that it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The curriculum is good and is kept under constant review. Vocational options, now a key element of courses in Years 10 and 11, are being extended each year and are now being introduced into the sixth form. The curriculum in Key Stage 3 has also been enhanced by the school's specialist status, particularly in relation to drama and communication in Year 9. In other years, however, it remains subject-based and students cannot always transfer their skills into other areas and are not always aware of the links between subjects.

The supportive and knowledgeable governing body underpins all the school does and members are never afraid to hold the leadership to account. Parents, too, play an active part in many initiatives and are delighted with what the school does for their offspring. A typical comment is, 'I am so impressed with the praise and encouragement given to every child. My daughter would attend seven days a week if

she could!' Turton High is a school where students come first. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding sixth form in which students make excellent progress and reach well above average standards because of challenging teaching from staff who have very secure knowledge of their subjects. Outstanding leadership has established rigorous procedures for monitoring and tracking progress and is now looking to provide even more personal support for its students.

Students begin the sixth form with broadly average standards but exceed challenging targets at both AS and A level. Students who join the sixth form from other schools settle in quickly because transition procedures are highly effective. Retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 are high. The proportion of students who go on to higher education, including entry to prestigious universities, is similarly impressive. Students enjoy the sixth form and feel safe and secure in its caring and supportive environment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum in Key Stage 3 to ensure that students can transfer their skills across subjects and see the links between the different topics they are studying.
- Extend the use of ICT in order that students can take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Achievement and standards **Grade: 2** **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students enter the school with above average standards but there is an increasing number arriving with social and emotional problems. They make good progress across the school and attainment is well above average by the time they leave.

More effective use of data to set targets and to plan appropriate intervention is leading to a marked increase in achievement in Key Stage 3 and to above average standards at the end of Year 9. However, there are not enough cross-curricular opportunities to enable students to transfer their skills from one subject to another and the lack of ICT inhibits more independent learning.

Students make rapid progress in Key Stage 4 and the percentage attaining five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, was well above average in 2006. Inspection evidence confirms that students in the current Year 11 are on course to reach even higher standards and continue the improvement in attainment since the previous inspection. Students with learning difficulties make progress at a rate in line with their peers because of the outstanding support and guidance they receive.

Prior attainment levels on entry to the sixth form are broadly average because of the flexible admittance requirements. Students respond enthusiastically to the benefits of specialist status and they make outstanding progress. Their well above average standards ensure that almost 90% enter higher education year on year. This year, for example, over a fifth plan to study medicine and related subjects and four students have offers from Oxford or Cambridge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

As parents say, 'Our children have become more confident and more socially aware since arriving at Turton.' VOL confirm this view and add that teachers encourage them to express their opinions and always act upon their views. The award of Healthy School status, for example, is due in no small part to the students on the healthy schools working party, the travel plan they introduced and to their overriding concern for their classmates. Indeed, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and reinforced by the activities promoted by specialist school status, including the plethora of trips to foreign climes. Students recognise that, as a mainly all-white school, they need to inform themselves of cultures and religions different to their own and comment, 'We welcome people from other cultures when they come to talk to us.' Physical activity is a strong feature and extra-curricular teams are available not just for talented sportsmen and women, but also for less talented players. Students behave well, are very proud of their school and their attendance is consistently above average. They are prepared well for life after formal education and have a wide range of opportunities for work experience and careers guidance.

Personal development in the sixth form is good and students lead a variety of initiatives for the benefit of the local community. The sixth form college council is at an early stage of development and does not yet represent the views of students as comprehensively as it might.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's learning and teaching group has introduced redesigned lesson plans and emphasises the importance of regular feedback to students, in order that they are fully aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The use of assessment data is now more focused as a result and demonstrates the school's determination to ensure ongoing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Realistic challenge and high expectations are features of the best lessons and students are fully engaged in the activities. In an impressive Year 10 history lesson, for example, students made perceptive comments on how 1930s appeasement may be justified and they used historical terminology accurately and in context. The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is underdeveloped and, on occasions, teachers direct

learning activities too much. Secure specialist knowledge, a fascination with the subject-matter and detailed marking are key features of teaching in the sixth form, which is outstanding overall.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Specialist status has allowed the school to broaden its arts curriculum and the dedicated media suite and film studio have led to higher standards in relevant subjects in both Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. An increasing number of vocational courses and also a modern language course for all students are key elements of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11, which meets the needs, aspirations and interests of students well. The Key Stage 3 curriculum remains traditional: there are few opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning and they are not always able to transfer skills from one subject to another. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding and the buildings are alive with activities before school and at the end of the day. Students speak highly of the breakfast club, music and drama rehearsals, the wide range of sporting activities and the opportunities they have to make films, sometimes with professional directors.

The sixth form curriculum comprises a good range of academic courses and is aimed primarily at university entrance. Nonetheless, the college is concerned to meet the needs of students with different ambitions and is developing a variety of vocational diplomas to build upon courses already offered in Key Stage 4.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Parents recognise and pay testament to the outstanding way in which the school cares for, supports and guides their offspring to success in both personal and academic terms. As they say, 'Teachers show a caring and interested attitude to the development of young people which begins even before they transfer from primary school.' Students agree and VOL members add, 'You get all the help you need here, whether you are academic or not.' From the Nurture Group in Year 7 to the Student Support Centre, staffed by a range of learning, community and pastoral mentors, students of all abilities are supported and challenged to do their best in every area of school life: vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties get an excellent deal from the school. Comprehensive tracking of progress, informative marking of students' work and regular target-setting days ensure that academic guidance is equally impressive. Students are fully aware of their current performance and of how to reach their targets. Pastoral care is a major strength of the school and child protection arrangements are fully in place.

Care and guidance in the sixth form have improved since the previous inspection and are now good. Students feel well supported and the college is now looking to extend its range of personal mentors.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The development of students' potential, both in personal and academic terms, is central to the work of the leadership team. Fully supported, yet regularly challenged by the well-informed governing body, the inspirational headteacher and talented senior leaders have introduced a range of relevant strategies to ensure ongoing improvement in all areas of school life. Moreover, specialist college status continues to play a major role in the development of the curriculum and in raising the self-esteem of students. Middle leaders in both pastoral and academic areas work hand in hand for the benefit of their students and are taking increasing responsibility for the success of the school. 'Our views are sought by senior leaders' they say, 'and we receive the utmost support and advice when we introduce new initiatives.'

Outstanding leadership in the sixth form has led to excellent student achievement and both provision and outcomes go from strength to strength, with more applications for entry this year than ever before.

Impressive teamwork at all levels, a real pride in both staff and students and good progress since the previous inspection demonstrate that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has insufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	No

Annex B



25 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Turton High School Media Arts College, Bromley Cross Road, Bolton BL7 9LT

Thank you all so much for your wonderful welcome when we visited your school recently. You made our job very enjoyable and gave us so much vital information to help us with the inspection. We learned quickly that you are very proud of Turton High School and we feel that you have every justification to be so. We think it is a good school too and we believe that the sixth form is outstanding! We would like to share with you just why we enjoyed our visit.

You make good progress in your studies and reach high standards because you work hard and your teachers teach you well. In the sixth form you do even better and a high proportion of you go to university. Not only do your teachers, teaching assistants and mentors give you the highest levels of care and support, you do that for each other also. 'Voices Out Loud' (VOL) in particular tries so hard to make suggestions to help your school get even better and student mentors in Year 10 and in the sixth form do what they can to make sure that everyone is happy. Turton is a school which tries to bring the best out of all of you, whether you find the work easy or hard.

You really enjoy what media arts status does for your school and the media centre and film studio are very popular indeed. The trips you make to Austria, Belgium and Spain, for example, for music and sports do a lot to teach you about other countries and cultures.

We know that your headteacher and other staff work hard to make your school what it is and we have now asked them to give you more opportunities to use ICT for your learning. We also think it is important to give students in Years 7, 8 and 9 more chances to practise the skills they learn in one subject to other areas of the curriculum.

Thank you again for your help. Please make sure that you keep working hard, telling VOL what you think and taking care of each other. Your teachers are proud of you and we know that you are proud of them!

Best wishes

Jim Kidd
Lead Inspector