

Tiverton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113548
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357377
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Robinson
Headteacher	Andrew Lovett
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors carried out observations of 35 part lessons taught by 38 teachers and saw parts of tutor time as well as a house assembly. Ten of the lessons were jointly observed by a member of the school's leadership team. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and another learning walk focused on behaviour. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, three members of the governing body and different groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. They analysed 388 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and those completed by a sample of students from each year group and 89 staff.

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

- How well all students are achieving, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The extent to which teaching provides both support and challenge for all groups of students.
- The contribution to school improvement made by partnerships and the arts specialism.
- The accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners.

Information about the school

Tiverton High School is larger than most comprehensive schools. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; their needs include moderate learning difficulties, and there are also students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is in line with that found nationally. Specially resourced provision for special educational needs for up to eight students with autism was opened in 2010; places are currently occupied by five students. The school has held visual arts specialist status since 2003 and has achieved the Artsmark silver award. It also holds Healthy School Plus status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Tiverton High School is a good school which has successfully established itself as a strong cohesive learning community that reflects well its values of cooperation, total inclusion and success for all. Under the leadership of a dynamic headteacher, the strong senior leadership team has demonstrated the drive, determination and passion required of leaders and managers in a successful school. The school provides an outstanding level of care, advice and guidance for groups of students and for individuals by working closely with a range of outside agencies, education and business partners. Consequently, it has successfully developed a flexible and responsive structure to provide for the wide range of students' needs. The school's art specialist status has been utilised effectively to drive forward the work in raising aspirations and securing achievement. Curriculum provision has been expanded and refined and, as a result, the needs of all students are being met more effectively. Consequently, there is a rising trend in attainment and overall, students make good progress. The school has continued to build upon the strengths identified in the previous inspection and its capacity to sustain this improvement is good because:

- it is led well by a headteacher who has a commitment and passion to raise the aspirations of all students and achieve the highest quality outcomes for them
- leadership across the school has been strengthened: school development planning and successful interventions to support learning are firmly based on the findings of accurate self-evaluation
- there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among staff, and a commitment to raising attainment and improving achievement for all.

Teaching is good overall and, at its best, enthuses and engages the students through a creative and imaginative approach. Expectations of students' capabilities have been raised through more stringent use of assessment data to set challenging targets and inform teachers' planning. The best lessons were characterised by learning activities specifically tailored to stretch and challenge all learners regardless of starting point. These lessons ensured good opportunities for students to influence and steer learning by developing ideas of their own, acting as partners in the learning process, or by learning independently of the teacher. Teachers use effective questioning to gauge students' understanding and, where necessary, reshape explanations and offer high-quality verbal and written guidance about steps for improvement. However, these skills are not yet apparent in all teaching.

Students say they feel safe in school, and the outstanding systems to support their welfare have an extremely positive effect on their personal development. The wide range and good quality of personalised and individual programmes enables students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school, as well as those students in the school's specialist autism resource base, to make good progress academically and in their

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personal development. Leadership and management are good in the resource base, as in the main school. The outstanding range of partnerships and the excellent opportunities arising from the school's specialist status enable students to make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Behaviour is good in and around the school; students are polite and courteous to each other and staff, and say that they enjoy their time at the school. This is illustrated by the sustained improvement in attendance and significant reduction in the number of students who are persistently absent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning so a higher proportion of lessons are good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that systems for monitoring and supporting teaching and learning result in the very best practice being seen more consistently across the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently well when planning lessons so that work is closely aligned to students' individual needs and provides high levels of challenge for all
 - extending the use of high-quality dialogue and probing questions in lessons to give students more opportunities to be creative, develop their ideas fully, deepen their thinking and take greater responsibility for their learning and progress
 - ensuring consistency in the use of day-to-day assessment so that all students know exactly what they need to do to improve their work through high-quality subject-specific verbal and written feedback.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the large majority of lessons observed, students made good progress and achieved well. This is most evident when work is carefully planned to challenge and interest every student. When encouraged, they show they can be creative, they develop their ideas well and take good responsibility for managing their own learning. Historically, attainment has been low, reflecting low attainment on entry to the school. However, over the last three years, there has been strong and steady improvement because students are now making good progress, regardless of their background, starting points or special educational needs. GCSE examination results have improved and attainment is now broadly average. The standards seen in lessons and students' books result from early examination entry, and the school's latest analysis of current performance indicates that the school is on track to continue the strong upward trend in attainment. The school has been effective in the action it has taken to raise achievement in English and mathematics. As a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, changes to the leadership and management structure, and a more-focused approach to intervention and the development of literacy skills, students have closed the gap towards what is attained nationally.

Students report that they feel safe, and most parents and carers agree. Students told inspectors that incidents of bullying are infrequent but, when bullying does occur, then it is dealt with speedily and effectively by staff. A minority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires, and some students, were concerned that lessons are sometimes disrupted but this was not reflected in the good behaviour observed in lessons

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by inspectors and around the school. In their interviews with inspectors, students reported that there is good behaviour over time and that teachers are usually effective in dealing with such issues. Where students' behaviour was less than good in lessons, it was clearly linked to learning activities that failed to sufficiently challenge learners and hold their interest.

Students are greatly engaged in their learning in specialist arts subjects, and achieve excellent academic results and personal skills that support them to take the next steps in their lives with confidence. Students say how much they value their school and local community, and demonstrate good engagement in a variety of ways. For example, through the work of the 'Ambassadors' team, school prefects, performing arts productions, charitable work and leadership of sports festivals for local primary schools.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The way in which the school cares for and supports students is outstanding. Everyone is known as an individual and the excellent links to external agencies complement a coherent, integrated approach to ensure the well-being of all students, especially the most vulnerable. Clearly targeted support for individuals and groups of potentially vulnerable learners has resulted in improvements in attitudes, confidence, achievement and relationships for many of these students. Individual support and provision for students in the main school with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the small number of

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autistic students are strong, thanks to the range and quality of personalised programmes available. For example, the programme to support literacy recovery is particularly successful as a result of the high-quality group and one-to-one provision. The school has developed a comprehensive and detailed system to set targets for students and to track their progress. The resulting information is used well to identify students who could achieve more, but not all teachers make full use of this information when they plan their lessons.

The curriculum is developing well and provides an appropriate level of flexibility and wide array of support and options to meet the needs of individuals. At Key Stage 3, specialist status is used well to support the development of greater cross-curricular work alongside the development of personal, learning and thinking skills. This is having a positive impact on students who have recently entered the school as well as enhancing their choices for the future. At Key Stage 4, specialist status and the school's partnership work with local providers have improved the breadth and balance of academic, vocational and applied learning opportunities available for students. This has enabled a much greater degree of personalisation for students when selecting courses and, as a result, their aspirations, achievement and enjoyment are improving. There is a wide range of well-attended extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer which give good support to aspects of students' personal development.

The large majority of lessons observed were good or better. The best lessons use assessment information precisely to plan creative activities that challenge all learners, awaken their curiosity and draw them into learning. Imaginative use is made of information and communication technology to develop understanding, and good work is being done to develop stronger literacy skills across the curriculum. Positive relationships are a notable feature in most classes and help to establish an excellent platform for learning.

Less-effective lessons, where progress is satisfactory, typically have the following characteristics:

- a broad match of work to ability but some slow-paced learning activities that are insufficiently challenging and do not always match the differing needs of all students
- over-long teacher explanations which inhibit opportunities for students to deepen their thinking and to drive learning forward
- questioning that is functional but rarely delves deep in order to check and develop students' understanding
- interventions sometimes too readily made, which militates against students generating and exploring ideas of their own.

Marking and assessment vary in quality. They are at their best where teachers provide precise subject-specific guidance so that students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. For example, an outstanding English lesson engaged students in a dialogue about assessment and empowered students to articulate the key features required to achieve the highest-quality written responses. However, this practice is not consistent across subjects. In too many cases, guidance is of limited value, providing general comments that do not enable the student to respond to and/or reshape their learning.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher inspires a strong belief in the school's success, and the fulfilment of every pupil's potential is central to its ethos. Teamwork and collegiality are evident throughout the school, and the headteacher's vision is shared and implemented by staff at all levels, governors and students. Leadership across the school has been strengthened. Senior leaders form a strong team and provide good support to middle leaders in order to sharpen improvement planning in the light of information gained from regular monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, expectations of students' capabilities have been raised and the quality of middle leadership is developing well. School leaders recognise that monitoring and evaluation are not yet sufficiently refined to ensure that the very best practice is seen across all curriculum areas.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is exemplified by its work to successfully raise attainment and achievement. Challenging targets are now being met regularly and a more sophisticated tracking system is being used effectively to secure and accelerate students' progress. The governing body plays an effective role in the school's development. It holds the school to account, has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and ensures that it provides good value for money. Governors' confidence and expertise in evaluating the performance of the school in relation to national expectations are growing. Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school takes the protection of its students very seriously; effective procedures and well-established training are in place to keep students safe. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. Its strengths are in the well-established international links and how it uses specialist status and strong partnerships with primary and further education providers to engage with and support the needs of its immediate community. Students' understanding of life in other communities across Britain is not as well developed.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average percentage of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority were overwhelmingly positive about most aspects of the school's work. A small minority of parents and carers who responded raised concerns about behaviour in some lessons or the effectiveness with which the school enables them to support their child's learning. The inspection team judged that behaviour was good in and around the school during this inspection, thanks to the quality of provision and procedures that are in place. They also judged that the school works extremely hard to communicate information about students' progress and provides regular opportunities for parents and carers to discuss teaching and learning. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to support parents and carers, keep them informed and act upon their views. Most parents and carers who responded are happy with their child's experience and enjoyment at the school, and believe that it is led and managed very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Tiverton High 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 388 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1319 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	90	23	259	67	33	9	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	23	264	68	24	6	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	126	32	220	57	34	9	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	130	34	218	56	34	9	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	91	23	258	66	21	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	19	227	59	67	17	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	15	241	62	67	17	10	3
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)	121	31	224	58	28	7	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	87	22	249	64	34	9	8	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	18	215	55	67	17	18	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	17	233	60	37	10	12	3
The school is led and managed effectively	142	37	206	53	20	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	131	34	206	53	33	9	7	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 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.



11 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Tiverton High School, Tiverton EX16 6SQ

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. I am writing to tell you about our findings. We judged the school to be good. It has worked really hard since the last inspection to improve your achievement. Your headteacher leads the school very well, and is ably supported by other staff and the governors. They are all determined that you should have the opportunity to succeed and their work enables you to achieve good outcomes. You told us how much you appreciate the work of your teachers.

You enjoy coming to school, are extremely well cared for, have a good range of curricular opportunities and are well taught. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that the arts specialism has brought and its impact on your achievement and in helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond school. You like the range of curricular options that are available. You told us you feel safe, and we think your behaviour in and around the school is good. You are polite, friendly and make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community.

School leaders and staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. We have asked Mr Lovett and his team to concentrate in particular on:

- enabling teachers to share their best ideas across all subjects and learn from each other
- ensuring all teachers provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning and better meet your individual learning needs
- using dialogue and questions in lessons to deepen your understanding, allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas, and enabling you to take greater responsibility for your own learning and progress
- ensuring that teachers consistently give you high-quality feedback on your work so that you always know how to improve in each subject.

All of you can certainly help your teachers by responding to their comments and using the feedback that they give, so you improve your learning and the quality of your work.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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