

Torquay Girls Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136506
Local Authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	382062
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	860
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Avery
Headteacher	Nicholas Smith
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 September 2008
School address	30 Shiphay Lane Torquay TQ2 7DY
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 45 lessons, saw 44 teachers and met with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school's self-evaluation and development planning, information on monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching, and policies and procedures on safeguarding students. They also examined questionnaires completed by students, staff, and 143 parents and carers.

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

- The achievement of all groups of students, to determine whether teaching and the curriculum match their needs.
- The work of all leaders and managers in ensuring that provision consistently meets the needs of all students.

Information about the school

Torquay Girls Grammar School converted to academy status in February 2011. Its specialist status in the humanities was also re-designated in 2008. The specialist subjects are geography, history and religious education. The school is of average size for a secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that found in most schools. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is about average, as is the number of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well below average. Most students join the school at age 11 years and continue into the sixth form. The school collaborates with the local boys' grammar school to extend the curriculum offer for sixth form students at both schools.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. It is not complacent and continues to improve. The headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team and other leaders and managers, is successful in inspiring the school community to raise attainment further and to equip the students with extensive skills to support their transition into higher education. A parent wrote about the work of the school, 'I have seen my daughter grow into a well-educated, well-balanced, fine young lady, realising her potential.' Attainment at GCSE and A level is high and rising. The rapidly improving trend in attainment is due to rigorous and extensive monitoring of students' progress and of the quality of teaching and learning. Searching self-evaluation informs exceptionally well-focused school and subject development plans. Actions taken by the school are managed thoroughly. As a result, leaders and managers at all levels are taking effective steps to improve the quality of teaching still further. Consequently, outcomes in achievement and personal well-being are high, including for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Challenging targets, including for the specialist subjects, are met and exceeded. Given the track record of improvement and delegated outstanding leadership and management, the school demonstrates outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

Teaching is outstanding overall, mainly because of teachers' inspiring subject knowledge and their development of students' independent learning skills. However, the use of targets and assessment information is good and not outstanding. This is because not all teachers use assessment information to match lessons closely enough to the needs of each student to ensure all students make rapid progress. Students are not clear about what they need to do precisely to improve their work across all subjects.

The school has been innovative in identifying 16 key skills for success, based on interviews with former students with successful careers. The skills are applied across the outstanding curriculum and sixth formers are involved in a 'teaching students' initiative, thus reinforcing positive role models. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Consequently, attendance is high and behaviour is outstanding, as are all other outcomes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary and permeates the whole curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine teachers' use of assessment information in order to:

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

- match lessons more closely to the needs of individual students so that all students make rapid progress
- enable learners to be clear about what they need to do to improve their work across all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment has been significantly above average and improving at GCSE and A level for the past three years. The school’s data and students’ current work indicate that attainment is continuing to improve and any unevenness between students known to be eligible for free school meals, students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with special educational needs not receiving specialist support is reducing rapidly. In particular, attainment is high in the key subjects of English, mathematics and the specialist humanities subjects of geography, history and religious education. In lessons, students develop a range of independent learning skills exceptionally well, such as resilience, the ability to negotiate and problem solving. They demonstrate excellent concentration and are rarely off task. This is the case even in extended periods without direction from an adult, as in a Year 9 lesson involving discussing a design brief for an enterprise activity. Students are eager to learn. When given the opportunity, they lead their own learning, for example Year 11 students questioned each other in interrogating and discussing short stories in English. Due to outstanding specialist support, students with special educational needs and disabilities achieve exceptionally well.

Students agree strongly that they feel very safe. The extent to which they support each other and encourage each other to behave well is impressive. Consequently, behaviour is outstanding. Students understand very clearly how to keep healthy. Extensive opportunities to contribute to the school, local and international communities are seized eagerly by the students. They include acting as pastoral leaders, running a Fair Trade stall and charity work. Attendance is high and students develop excellent workplace skills through engaging in enterprising activities. All Year 11 students go on to education, employment or training. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Students reflect deeply on the experiences of others, for example Year 8 students considered the issue of equality when studying Sikhism. They display a keen sense of right and wrong. Their highly developed social skills are evident in the way they carry out their roles and responsibilities. They engage eagerly in cultural activities, including music and drama, and demonstrate extensive knowledge of other cultures.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	1

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

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is outstanding and promotes outstanding outcomes. Several parents and carers wrote in praise of teachers giving generously of their time to support their children. Students similarly praised the staff. In the most effective lessons, teachers have exceptionally high expectations of students' contributions, as evident in their probing questioning. They share the responsibility for learning with the students, for example in using key questions to encourage students to lead discussions in English. Their lessons are well structured, using interesting and engaging tasks to lead the students from their prior knowledge to exploring new learning objectives. Students are given many opportunities to develop independent skills such as making decisions, problem solving, explaining and evaluating. However, not all teachers are using students' challenging targets and assessment information to match lessons to the specific needs of individuals to ensure they all make rapid progress. Students are not clear how to improve their work in all subjects because they are not required to refer to their curricular targets in lessons and the marking of their work does not always indicate the next steps for improvement.

The outstanding curriculum provides memorable experiences, including residential visits to Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, and rich opportunities for students to develop a wide range of personal and learning skills. The specialist school programme provides enrichment activities through visits, 'teach to learn' projects, humanities week and so on. Students are known as individuals, and outstanding care, guidance and support are targeted to their specific needs. As a result, attainment is improving rapidly for all groups of students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Due to the highly effective work of the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, students are reaching ambitious targets and staff morale is very high. The governing body makes an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school. The governors discharge their statutory responsibilities thoroughly and keep the work of the school under review. They are confident in providing professional challenge to hold the school to account. The views of parents and carers are sought regularly and used to inform important decisions about whole-school matters. The school communicates with them through a wide range of media. It works in a wide range of partnerships to benefit the students. It also supports local primary schools and those in challenging circumstances. It promotes equality of opportunity by aiming to achieve the best possible outcomes for all students. As a result of robust monitoring procedures, unevenness between different groups is reducing rapidly. There is no evidence of discrimination. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding and updated regularly. The school community is highly cohesive. Students reflect on religious, ethnic and socio-economic issues across subjects. Their awareness of local and international contexts is extensive. The school provides outstanding value for money. Finances and resources are managed exceptionally well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Sixth form

Students make outstanding progress in the sixth form, with no significant variation between groups. Attainment at A level is high and data on current students indicate it is likely to continue to rise. The extent to which students develop independent learning and personal skills, take on responsibilities and show leadership is striking. Retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are high, as is attendance. Most students progress to higher education. Much of the teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of the students and make effective use of examination criteria to enable them to reach challenging targets. Innovative elements of the curriculum include the AQA Baccalaureate and extended projects. Enrichment activities are well attended. Care, guidance and support prepare students effectively for further study and their chosen careers. Leadership and management of the sixth form are highly effective in following up rigorous monitoring with appropriate intervention. Partnerships enhance provision and the views of students are sought regularly and acted upon. The impact of outstanding provision and leadership and management on the high attainment of students results in the overall effectiveness of the sixth form being outstanding.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. A few parents and carers disagree that the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle, however, inspectors found that the school promotes students' physical, emotional and mental health exceptionally well. It provides a counsellor and a nurse. Healthy eating options are provided at lunchtime and there are 'healthy lifestyle days'. High numbers of students participate in the many opportunities for sport, however, poor facilities for indoor games inhibit the development of this area of work. A few parents and carers disagree that the school helps them to support their children's learning. Inspectors found that, while the school informs parents and carers about their children's targets at the end of each term, the targets are not always used during the term to inform improvements in the children's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Torquay Girls Grammar 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 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 860 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	71	38	27	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	89	62	52	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	73	51	61	43	3	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	57	52	36	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	74	52	62	43	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	64	45	59	41	11	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	34	70	49	14	10	0	0
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)	65	45	61	43	3	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	74	52	59	41	4	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	36	61	43	8	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	34	56	39	8	6	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	67	47	64	45	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	89	62	52	36	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Torquay Girls Grammar School, Torquay TQ2 7DY

It was a pleasure for the inspectors to see you at work. We would like to thank in particular those of you who completed the questionnaires and who met with us. We can see why you are proud of your school; it is outstanding.

The standards you attain at GCSE and A level are high and improving year on year. This is because the quality of teaching is improving and all leaders and managers monitor your progress rigorously. Your headteacher and senior staff constantly review all aspects of the school's work, including in the sixth form, to make sure they are outstanding. The curriculum has been enhanced by extensive partnerships with other schools and institutions. It enables you to develop a wide range of personal and learning skills. You told us how much you enjoy the many clubs and school trips. The school provides you with excellent care, guidance and support. As a result, you know how to keep safe and healthy, and your behaviour is outstanding and attendance is high. You are eager to learn and to fulfil the many opportunities for responsibility that the school offers.

Whilst almost all aspects of the school are outstanding, we found that teachers' use of your targets and assessment information could be refined to ensure all lessons enable each of you to make the best possible progress. We have also asked teachers to make sure you know how to improve your work in all subjects. You can help by monitoring your own progress towards your targets.

We wish you continuing success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater
Her Majesty's Inspector

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