

Tavistock College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113539
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	375436
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1726
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	391
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Mandy Govier
Principal	Mrs Helen Salmon
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 January 2010
School address	Crowndale Road Tavistock Devon PL19 8DD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons, observing 22 teachers. An inspector also briefly visited a number of lessons with the college's special educational needs coordinator looking at support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They held meetings with two members of the governing body, including the Chair, staff and groups of students. They observed the college's work, and looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents and students' books.

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

- The effectiveness of actions being taken to raise students' achievement by improving teaching and the curriculum.
- How effectively leaders and managers are making use of students' attainment data to raise achievement.
- The extent to which statutory requirements relating to equalities are being met.
- How effectively the college is contributing to and promoting community cohesion.

Information about the school

Tavistock College is a much-larger-than-average secondary school. Almost half of the students travel to and from the college by bus, from a wide surrounding area. Most students are of White British heritage and the proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found in most schools. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. The most commonly identified need relates to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The college obtained specialist status in languages in 1996.

When Tavistock College was inspected in January 2010, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the college was inspected on four occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, the college was judged to be making satisfactory progress.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. The college now provides a satisfactory education for its students. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

The Principal has driven improvement through an unrelenting focus on improving teaching and promoting the importance of success for all students. She, with the able support of the governing body, has established a stable and effective senior leadership team. Together, they are having a positive impact on students' achievement and attainment is rising across the college. Self-evaluation procedures are good and judgments of the college's strengths and weaknesses are accurate. The college development plan is well focused on those areas still in need of improvement. The quality of the college's development plan and the leadership team's recent track record in bringing about improvement provide the college with a good capacity to improve further.

The two-year decline in attainment at the end of Year 11 was reversed this summer. The percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics rose by 16 percentage points. The attainment of students is average and their achievement is satisfactory and improving. The variation in students' achievement between different subjects is closing although some differences still remain. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding, especially where teachers actively engage students in learning. However, there are too many lessons in which teaching is satisfactory to ensure that students make good progress across all subjects. In these lessons, activities are not well enough matched to students' ability and learning needs. The quality of marking also varies across the college and does not always give students clear advice on how to improve and move to the next level or grade.

The college has a caring, welcoming ethos. As a result, students feel safe and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students say they enjoy college and their attendance has improved during the past two years, but remains at an average level. Their contribution to the college and the wider community is good. The vast majority of students behave sensibly around the college site demonstrating respect for their peers. Students generally behave well in lessons. However, if lessons do not capture their interest or are delivered at too slow a pace a few can

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become disengaged and occasionally affect the learning of others.

The curriculum has been developed well since the last inspection and now provides students with a broad range of both academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 that meets their needs and aspirations well. Targets set for students in the courses they follow are challenging and systems to track their progress have been developed very well during the past two years. A number of middle leaders are evaluating this tracking data and other monitoring information well to develop and implement effective plans to drive improvement. However, this good practice is not consistently in place across all subject areas.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring inspection by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching in order to accelerate students' progress in lessons and raise attainment in all subjects by ensuring that:
 - all lessons provide engaging activities, that proceed at a good pace and actively involve students in learning
 - all lessons provide students with challenging activities that are well matched to their ability and learning needs
 - teachers make effective use of targeted questioning to check and develop students' understanding of new ideas and concepts
 - students are given consistently good written feedback so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Further reduce the variation in students' achievement between subjects by ensuring that all middle leaders effectively evaluate tracking and monitoring information and take robust action to drive improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics rose considerably this summer, reversing a two-year decline in attainment. The attainment gap between boys and girls also closed, although it remains slightly larger than that seen nationally. There was a particularly large rise in the percentage of students attaining A* to C grades in English. Students' achievement in this subject is now satisfactory. The variation in achievement between different subjects is closing although differences remain. For example, Year 11 achievement in modern foreign languages, the college's specialist subject, and physical education was below expected levels. Evidence that the curriculum is now better meeting the needs of lower-attaining students was provided by the fact that the percentage of students attaining at least five GCSE A* to G grades rose to above the national average this summer.

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Students made good or even better progress in a number of lessons observed during this inspection although this was not consistently the case. As a result, students’ achievement between Years 7 and 11 is satisfactory. Students’ attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly average and their attainment at the end of Year 11 is broadly average, although it is rising. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar satisfactory progress.

Students respond and behave well in lessons when activities are interesting and actively involve them in learning. However, when activities fail to interest them or they spend too long listening to introductions from the teacher, restless behavior from a minority of students can affect the learning of others. Generally, students are respectful and get on well with their peers. They socialise well with each other and have a good moral understanding of right and wrong. Students’ cultural and spiritual development is good because the college teaches them about different lifestyles, cultures, races and religions well. Students feel safe in college and say that incidents of bullying are rare but when they do occur are dealt with well by staff. Students’ enjoyment of college is evident in their improving attendance, although it remains at an average level. Students are involved in a wide range of health-related activities through sport, and they have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. The curriculum and links with local business and industry help develop students’ work-related skills well. However, satisfactory achievement in English and mathematics means that their preparation for the world of work or the next stage in their education is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	3
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	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

Teaching and teachers' use of assessment have been improving in key areas, which is helping to lift students' attainment and progress in a number of subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are generally well planned using a common format. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and energetic and use a range of activities to engage, interest and involve students in learning. In these lessons, teachers make effective use of assessment data to pitch tasks at the range of ability of students in the class. For example, in the outstanding lessons seen in mathematics in Year 10 and history in Year 7, students showed high levels of independence and enjoyment as they worked either individually or in groups. They were engaged by a range of activities, such as group discussions, games and tasks that were well pitched to their ability, and in the Year 10 lesson linked to GCSE grades. In the majority of lessons, teachers carefully target their questions to involve different students, and ask students to explain their answers in some detail, thereby checking and developing their learning well. However, this good practice is not consistent across the college. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long, use a limited range of teaching strategies and do not check students' learning frequently enough through effective questioning. Tasks set for students are sometimes too difficult or not challenging enough for individual students. Students have a good knowledge of their targets, but do not always have a precise grasp of how to improve their work to reach them. Some marking is of high quality and provides good advice to students about how to improve. However, this good practice is not consistent across the college and teachers' written comments vary in the detail and advice they provide.

The curriculum is regularly reviewed and has been developed well since the previous inspection, to better meet the needs and interests of students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum contains a good, broad range of academic and vocational courses. This range is extended through links with other local providers. The links effectively forged with local business and industry have a positive impact on developing students' work-related skills and raising their aspirations. The college's specialist status in languages is reflected in the range of languages on offer and the international links it has developed with countries, such as Japan. The extra-curricular provision is wide and varied enabling many students to take part in a range of activities. In particular, the college's 'twilight' provision for Year 10 students provides good opportunities to develop their creative interests through a range of GCSE courses that are on offer. Around 40% of students are following one of these courses.

Pastoral support for students is strong. Transition arrangements into Year 7 are good and older students report positively on the quality of information, advice and guidance given to them when choosing courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Staff know students well and they work effectively with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable students are well cared for and supported. However, the in-class support for students with special educational needs and/or

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disabilities is variable in quality across the college. Good guidance and support help students at risk of disengagement to manage their own behaviour and, therefore, to engage more effectively in learning. As a result, behaviour has improved since the previous inspection. Child protection procedures are very well developed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The Principal provides the college with very clear and effective leadership and she is well supported by the senior leadership team. Together, they have been effective in raising expectations about the quality of provision and driving up the ambition of staff and students. Teaching is improving across the college because it is being monitored well and robust action has been taken to improve its quality. A range of effective professional development opportunities are being provided to teachers to improve their practice. Systems to track the progress of groups of students across all subjects have been developed very well since the previous inspection. Underachieving students are now quickly identified and provided with increasingly effective support. This careful tracking, linked to effective intervention helps to raise attainment and close the gaps in achievement between groups of students and between subjects. The rise in Year 11 achievement in English and science last summer and the marked closing of the gap in attainment between boys and girls are clear indicators of the success of the college's strategies to promote equality of opportunity.

All middle leaders are supportive of the senior leadership's ambition to raise achievement, and play an increasingly effective role in raising students' achievement. However, not all are equally effective in evaluating tracking and monitoring information and robustly driving further improvement.

Members of the governing body have a clear determination to ensure that all students achieve their full potential. They are well aware of the college's strengths and areas in need of improvement through close monitoring of performance information. They have established a settled and effective senior leadership team to which they now provide a good level of support and challenge. The governing body is rigorous in ensuring that students and staff are safe and it discharges its statutory duties effectively. Safeguarding arrangements are good and leaders and managers ensure that all staff are well informed about child protection policies and procedures. The college has a clear understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic

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context and is effective in promoting community cohesion. As well as providing opportunities for students to engage in national and international projects, the college and its students play a strong role in local community events.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	3

Sixth form

Students learn well and make good progress on the courses they follow in both Years 12 and 13. However, there is some variability in students’ performance across subjects. For example, achievement is very good in subjects such as biology, mathematics, law and physics but weaker in others, such as Japanese, physical education and sociology. Students attend well and make a good contribution to the wider life of the college and the community; for example, through organising fund raising events, such as ‘Children in Need’, as sports leaders, or through helping younger students with their reading.

Good-quality teaching enables students to develop as effective learners and make good progress in the subjects they follow. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and plan lessons well. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between teachers and students. Thorough assessment procedures keep staff and students well informed about progress and enable students to identify and work towards clear targets. The curriculum meets current students’ needs, but the leadership team rightly recognises that as Year 11 students complete the recently introduced vocational courses in Key Stage 4 appropriate courses will need to be provided for them to follow in the sixth form. Care, guidance and support are effective. Students are well known and very appreciative of the help and support they receive from staff. Good advice and support are given as students move into higher education, work or training.

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Leadership and management are good. The leadership team has recently introduced a more rigorous system to track students’ progress. This enables those students who are making less than expected progress to be identified early and provided with appropriate support. Procedures for tackling areas of weakness are becoming increasingly effective. This is leading to the variation in students’ achievement between subjects beginning to reduce.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

As this was originally a section 8 inspection, Ofsted did not send out a questionnaire to parents and carers prior to the inspection. The college has recently sought parents’ and carers’ views through parent forums and college events. Parental responses indicate that they would like more time to meet with teachers during parents’ evenings. The college leadership team is currently putting together plans to meet this request. Some parents and carers have also raised concerns about students’ behaviour. The inspection team judged that students’ behaviour is satisfactory and improving. Communication with parents and carers has been improved over the past couple of years although the college leadership team is currently reviewing and developing the ways it seeks parents’ and carers’ views.

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.

5 December 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Tavistock College, Tavistock, PL19 8DD

I would like to thank you for the way in which you welcomed the inspection team when we visited your college. As you know, the college has been receiving some extra help called 'special measures'. I am delighted to tell you that the college no longer needs this help because the college's governing body, the Principal and staff have made some important improvements. I think the college now provides you with a satisfactory education while the sixth form is good. The college has a good capacity to get even better. Here is a list of the college's main strengths.

- There is a welcoming, friendly ethos in the college.
- The progress you make in your learning between Years 7 and 11 is satisfactory and improving. The grades Year 11 students attain in their examinations are rising.
- Your progress is being monitored well and those of you who are not making the progress you should are provided with effective extra help.
- Those of you in the sixth form are taught well and your achievement is good.
- Staff know you well and take good care of you. During discussions you told us that you feel safe in college.
- Many of you take a full part in the life of the college and make a good contribution to your local community.
- You are provided with a broad range of both academic and vocational courses in Key Stage 4 that meet your needs and interests well.

In order to make your college even better, we have asked the college leaders to make some improvements.

- The majority of your lessons proceed at a good pace and teachers provide you with tasks that are interesting and well matched to your ability and learning needs. We would like all staff to ensure that more of your lessons are like this. We have also asked all staff to ensure that written comments give you clear and helpful advice about how to improve.
- We have asked subject and year leaders in the college to ensure that you make similar, good progress in all your subjects.

You can help to make these improvements by attending regularly and continuing to get actively involved in activities arranged for you by staff.

Yours sincerely
Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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