

Torbay School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134126
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	381612
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

Type of school	Special school
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	48
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mark Bennett
Headteacher	Mike Lock
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by seven different teachers. The inspector looked at pupils' achievements, the school development plan, recent notes from meetings of the interim executive board, pupils' work and lesson plans. Questionnaires from seven parents and carers, 15 pupils and 18 staff were taken into consideration.

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

- The impact of leadership and management on improving systems for assessing progress and improving marking.
- Evidence of increased opportunities for vocational experiences for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Improvements in pupils' rates of attendance and in their behaviour.

Information about the school

Pupils who attend Torbay School come from across the unitary authority of Torbay. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs because of their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A few pupils have additional difficulties such as learning difficulties or autism. A small minority of pupils are looked after by the local authority. There were no girls attending the school at the time of the inspection. Almost all pupils have been excluded from their previous mainstream or special schools. An executive headteacher was appointed in May 2011 and a new substantive headteacher has now been appointed for January 2012. There is currently an interim executive board but a new full governing body is already in place to start in January.

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****3**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Torbay school is a satisfactory school. It has improved since the previous inspection and now provides a sound education for its pupils. Leadership and management have been through a difficult period over the past few years with several changes of personnel. However, the executive headteacher and the school's senior management team have worked successfully to lead the school forward. They have been ably supported by the interim executive committee. Parents are pleased with the improvements to the school. 'I am very impressed with the changes and for my son they have worked very well', wrote one parent in response to the inspection questionnaires.

There is now a trend of improvement in key areas, particularly in the quality of care for pupils and the rigorous attention to improving pupils' personal development, which has led to rising attendance and significant improvements in pupils' behaviour and attitudes. In their questionnaires almost all pupils said that adults at the school care about them and are interested in their views. Most say that they feel safe at school and that they feel supported to lead healthy lifestyles. Many are proud of their school. They eagerly expressed their pride in the fact that their school cook recently came second in a national school's competition and provides really healthy lunches.

Progress has improved and most pupils now make at least satisfactory progress at the school and for some, progress is accelerating. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 acquire some national qualifications such as GCSEs as well as vocational qualifications. Although attendance is average and rising, a few pupils do not attend often enough. Disruptions to lessons are now very rare, so that behaviour is satisfactory. However, a very small minority of students and staff do not yet adhere fully to the new behaviour systems, which is hampering behaviour from being better still.

Teaching is at least satisfactory, and in English and mathematics, where subject expertise is effective, teaching is often good. Very occasionally, weaker teaching is evident because of low expectations leading to more limited progress.

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The curriculum has improved well so that there are particular strengths in the quality of enrichment which all pupils value. Strategies to help pupils manage their own behaviour are not yet fully evident.

Recent, good and accurate self-evaluation shows that leaders and managers are fully aware of what needs doing to bring about improvements. New systems to assess and track progress are beginning to inform leaders about the next steps of pupils' learning. Marking has improved since the last inspection and now provides helpful advice and guidance to pupils, although they are not yet all fully involved in setting and measuring their own targets. The interim executive committee is very knowledgeable and provides regular and rigorous challenge to leaders. They are fully committed to improving the school. Although leaders recognise that there is more to do, their actions have shown that the school has at least a satisfactory capacity to continue improving.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning to at least good so that students' achievement is good by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve so that more work is completed in the time allowed
 - engaging pupils in setting and measuring their own targets.
- Improve behaviour by:
 - ensuring that the behaviour system is understood by staff and pupils
 - making sure it is used consistently in all classes
 - increasing the range of strategies available to pupils so that they can learn to manage their own behaviour.
- Work closely with pupils, parents and carers, and support agencies to improve attendance, particularly by the small minority who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils have a wide range of ability but often have barriers to learning caused by disruptions to their education experiences because of their emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Leaders are working securely to help them to overcome barriers so that all groups make at least sound progress and improve their basic skills during their time at the school. Pupils with behaviour difficulties are doing better. Those with additional learning difficulties, including those with autism spectrum

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conditions, achieve as well as their peers because of good quality support which enables them to develop confidence in their learning.

The majority of older pupils regularly acquire accredited qualifications which help them to prepare for their futures. More-able pupils make satisfactory progress towards their GCSE examinations while other students attain entry level qualifications. A group of year 7 pupils made particularly good progress in English because of an exciting task that inspired their imaginations. They were required to create a plan to make a handbook for a trainee vampire. Expectations were different for each pupil with a clear extension task for the more able. Pupils focused on the key features of an information text because of a good presentation, clear instructions and because they were enthused by the task.

Year 10 pupils made good progress in mathematics as they successfully completed simple equations as part of the GCSE preparations. Clear objectives were carefully shared with pupils and the teachers' creative style of teaching kept pupils interested. Pupils' learning dips in lessons where expectations are not high enough and when they are unclear about their own specific individual targets.

Pupils rightly feel that they lead healthy lives. 'This is an active school', commented a member of the school council. Pupils take part in a wide range of sports activities, more recently playing matches against other local schools. They value the school fitness room highly and talk with enthusiasm about their skills. They benefit from healthy, well-presented school lunches and from the good quality food technology department, which helps them to learn about healthy eating. The school council is developing appropriately. For example, it is currently working with leaders to agree a full school uniform.

Pupils feel that the school has changed for the better. 'The school has got a lot stricter. You get detention for staying out of class for too long', said one student. They recognise that behaviour is improving and they value the way that the points they earn for good work and behaviour contribute to some out of school activities. They raise money for charities and a few undertake some vocational work with local businesses. Pupils mostly get on well and have a satisfactory awareness of other cultures and lifestyles. Pupils feel that the school now helps them to be better prepared for their futures, although they agree that they are not all aware of their targets.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	3

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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	
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	3
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	3

How effective is the provision?

The school provides a supportive ethos for its pupils. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are mainly positive. Teachers make effective use of resources, particularly information and communication technology (ICT), which pupils really value. When teaching is strong, clear expectations ensure that the pace of pupils' learning is good, so that they make good gains in learning. There are a few instances where the pace of learning dips because tasks lack challenge and behaviour is not managed well enough. Assessment has improved and pupils' work is marked well, offering praise and support.

An appropriate range of courses is provided. Specialist provision for the hardest to reach pupils tailored to their individual needs is helping to engage even the most challenging pupil in education and/or training. Planning to meet individual needs is improving but is not yet evident in all lessons. Pupils value the many enrichment opportunities, for example, the regular visits into the community, the annual trip to London and the many sporting activities. Breakfast club is well attended and the morning meeting provides a calm and orderly start to the day, contributing well to pupils' social and moral development. Links with local schools have improved and contribute well to enrichment. Provision for vocational education is improving.

The school cares well for all groups of pupils, and effective links with support agencies and parents and carers mean that pupils are effectively supported. Though there is more to do to improve the behaviour and attendance of a few pupils, effective new procedures are beginning to work. Transition into and out of the school is carefully managed, and care for those who are potentially the most vulnerable is good.

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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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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership of the executive headteacher and the interim executive committee has resulted in improved provision and outcomes for all pupils. The new leaders, along with the school's new senior management team, have an ambitious vision for its future. Almost all of the staff who completed a questionnaire said that they are now proud to work at the school and feel that their contributions are being valued. In the short time that they have been at the school the senior leaders and managers have embedded ambition and driven improvement effectively. For example, rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning has resulted in a very clear picture of the schools' successes and knowledge of where improvements are still required.

Leaders promote equality and eliminate discrimination appropriately so that all groups achieve equally. All pupils at the school have equal access to all the opportunities provided. Accurate self-evaluation, including the monitoring of different groups, ensures that leaders know what is working well and what needs improving. They acknowledge the need to further improve attendance, behaviour and the consistency of teaching. Leaders are embedding their ambition for the school by working closely with other schools locally to provide increased opportunities for sport and work experience.

Statutory responsibilities, including those relating to safeguarding, fully meet current government guidelines. These are well monitored and the site is very safe and secure. The school adopts recommended good practice for all aspects of safeguarding, regularly updating its procedures and providing good training for all staff. The sound strategy for community cohesion is based on a clear analysis of the school's context. Effective plans ensure good engagement with a wide range of community groups locally, and a productive link with a similar school in France is helping to promote pupils' awareness of different lifestyles. Leaders are working to develop wider links beyond the school.

Partnership activities are satisfactory and improving and are beginning to

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have a positive impact on preparing pupils for their futures. Sound links with parents and carers are beginning to have an impact on rising attendance, although this remains an area for sustained improvement.

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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaires. Most of those who did respond say that they are happy with the school and that they are well informed about their child's progress. They rightly believe that their children are safe and secure and most are pleased with the improvements at the school. 'The school has my 100% backing', commented one parent. Although the majority of parents say that their child does not enjoy school, most admit that recently their children are keener to come to school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Torbay 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 inspector received seven completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 48 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	14	2	29	4	57	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	2	29	3	43	2	29	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	57	2	29	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	2	29	3	43	1	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	2	29	4	57	1	14	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	29	3	43	2	29	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	29	3	43	0	0	1	14
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)	2	29	2	9	1	14	1	14
The school meets my child's particular needs	2	29	2	2	2	29	1	14
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	29	2	29	1	14	2	29
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	43	2	29	2	29	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	14	1	14	2	29	1	14
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	43	2	29	0	0	1	14

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.



5 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Torbay School, Paignton TQ3 2 AL

Thank you for your help during my recent visit to your school. This letter is to tell you some of the things I found out during my visit. You told me that Torbay School is 'alright' and I agree with you.

- Torbay school provides you with a satisfactory education.
- Most of you have improved your behaviour and it is now satisfactory. Well done for this and please keep it up!
- You have a good understanding of how to stay safe and how to keep healthy.
- Many of you are coming to school more often than you used to; well done!
- You make steady progress in your lessons.
- Your teachers and leaders take good care of you.
- Congratulations for working hard to be fit and healthy.

We are asking your school to do three things to help you do even better. You can help by learning your targets and working hard to achieve them.

- Make sure that more lessons are good, ensuring that teachers help you to learn and achieve your targets and have high expectations about your work. We would like more work to be completed in the time allowed.
- Improve the behaviour of the few pupils who do not behave well enough.
- Help those pupils who do not attend regularly to come to school as often as possible. Well done to those of you who attend every day!

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Denise Morris
Lead inspector

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