

# Tor Bridge High School

Miller Way, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 8UN

**Inspection dates** 2–3 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement 3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement 3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good 2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement 3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not good across different subjects and students are not yet gaining high enough standards in science and mathematics.
- Teaching is not always good. Sometimes students are not set work at the right level of difficulty or provided with opportunities to learn by finding things out for themselves.
- Not all staff set suitably challenging targets for their students and this hinders students' ability to reach their full potential, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Some teachers do not mark students' work often or thoroughly enough. Students are not always given time to reflect on their corrections and talk about their understanding of teachers' instructions.
- The quality of leadership across the school is inconsistent and this has affected students' progress in mathematics and science. Leaders have not yet eradicated the weaker teaching.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Teachers do not always challenge students effectively enough, especially those following A level courses.

### The school has the following strengths

- The principal has a strong vision for the school and is taking it in the right direction. The improvements she is making are impacting on the achievement of students.
- Students are cared for well, especially those who are vulnerable, and they feel safe. They have a clear understanding of how to manage risks and know how to stay safe when using the internet. This is a highly inclusive school.
- There is a positive climate and ethos for learning.
- Students are positive and well behaved in lessons and when moving around the school site.
- The school community is very welcoming. The principal and other senior leaders are tackling weaknesses in an open manner, working with staff and parents, and this is making a positive difference in many areas of the school.
- Students' progress in mathematics has improved steadily over the past three years but has not yet reached a standard that is in line with the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 lessons of which 16 were joint observations with the principal and other senior staff.
- Meetings were held with the principal, vice principals, senior staff, curriculum leaders and heads of the small schools within the main school, the head of sixth form, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, the external adviser and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) received during the inspection and the 114 responses from the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, scrutinised the school’s data about students’ achievement, looked at students’ work, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school’s work.
- The sixth form were not in school for one day of the inspection. The Year 11 and Year 13 students had left school. The prospective Year 7 students, currently Year 6 pupils from primary schools, were in school for one of the days.

## Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector
Dr Richard Steward	Additional Inspector
Anthony Byrne	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Tor Bridge High School is a larger than average school. The school converted to academy status in August 2011. When its predecessor school, Estover Community College, was inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good. The principal was appointed to the academy in September 2012.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those entitled to free school meals, those in local authority care and children with a parent in the armed services, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is also broadly average.
- Nineteen Key Stage 4 students attend alternative provision in vocational subjects at The Mountbatten Centre, Ridgeway Health and Beauty Centre, Penewin and South West Construction on a part-time basis.
- Two groups of the most able students take GCSE mathematics in the summer of Year 10.
- Over one hundred sixth form students attend local training providers and work placements. The school sixth form is in partnership with Sir John Hunt Community College and Lipson Community College.
- The school meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - making sure that the work set in lessons is at the right level of difficulty and is always challenging enough
  - insisting that all teachers mark students' work frequently and thoroughly and provide specific guidance on how to improve
  - providing opportunities for students to reflect on their corrections and say if they understand teachers' instructions
  - encouraging students to become even more independent as learners and find out things for themselves.
- Accelerate students' progress, particularly in mathematics and science at Key Stages 3 and 4, by making sure that staff set suitably challenging targets for all students.
- Ensure that leaders and managers work to eradicate the weaker teaching in the school, particularly in science
- Improve the effectiveness of the sixth form by making sure that students, especially those following A level courses, are always suitably challenged.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement is not consistently good across the school. Until recently, students' progress in mathematics and science was not good and, as a result, the standards achieved by the end of Year 11 have not been high enough. Achievement in mathematics is improving and more students are making the progress typically expected of them. However, not enough students are making rapid progress.
- Attainment on entry to Year 7 is variable; students in Years 10 and 11 came in with attainment that is in line with the national average whereas students in Years 7, 8 and 9 came in with attainment that is significantly below the national average.
- The boys are not performing as well as the girls in some year groups and not enough action has been taken to improve their progress.
- Achievement in English is good. Students' progress is at least good and some make rapid progress. The majority of students are entered early for GCSE mathematics and this has helped to improve attainment in this subject.
- Students eligible for free school meals are supported well through the pupil premium and attain at the same level as other students in English and mathematics.
- Students who have special educational needs are making progress that is in line with the other students in the school.
- Students in Year 13 are achieving in line with the national average at A2 level; students in Year 12 are performing below the national average at AS level but showing some improvement. Overall, the achievement of sixth form students following A level courses is not yet good. The most able students have been targeted to receive support to help them achieve the highest grades and this is beginning to accelerate their progress. Entry requirements have been raised to ensure students are on appropriate courses.
- The students studying courses such as sports and active leisure, health and beauty, building craft and progressive riding achieve well. These subjects are well suited for these students as they help them to make progress and learn in detail about careers in these areas. Their progress is closely monitored by the school. These students are well supported and attend regularly.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is too inconsistent across the school. In science there is some weaker teaching and consequently progress in the many different science subjects is not yet consistently good or outstanding.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers do not always set work that is hard enough or builds on students' previous learning. Teachers spend too long explaining things rather than allowing students enough time to learn by finding things out for themselves.
- In the sixth form, teachers do not always challenge students enough, particularly those on A level courses, and this limits their progress.
- Where teaching is good and outstanding, students respond eagerly to enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers. Teachers match work accurately to the ability and interests of the students. They ask searching questions that probe students' understanding and encourage students to discuss and check their work with others. This was evident, for example, in food technology for Year 7 and a lesson on catering for Year 10 students. The Year 6 pupils visiting the school had an outstanding experience when a mathematics teacher and an art teacher collaborated to create an engaging learning experience.
- Some teachers do not mark the students' work thoroughly or often enough, or provide specific guidance to students on how to improve. These weak aspects of teachers' performances are not

being tackled with enough urgency by the relevant subject leaders. Where marking is good, as in English, students are able to check their understanding of teachers' instructions. This does not yet happen in all subject areas.

- Not enough teachers are using effective methods to check that all learners are engaged and understanding the work. This means that certain students can dominate when responding whilst others remain passive and have no opportunity to discuss their learning.
- In some lessons, teaching assistants and intervention staff are effective and able to support in creative and influential ways, but this practice is not yet consistent. The school is aware of the variable practice and is taking steps to improve this.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Evidence shows that students behave well in lessons and around the school. Misbehaviour is uncommon and there are clear policies in place to deal with any issues. The school has worked hard to establish the very good atmosphere and attitudes to learning that exist now.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because where teaching does not fully engage students, they sometimes lose concentration, such as in the tutor periods.
- Relationships are positive across the school. Students are keen to learn and recognise the differences that have happened recently.
- Students feel safe and well cared for. They are confident about raising concerns and discussing any issues with the tutors and heads of school. They like being in their vertical tutor groups and having time with students across the full age range in the school. Attendance is improving but there are still a few persistent non-attendees.
- Students enjoy the welcoming and friendly community of the school and feel that the new facilities have helped with this. There is a zero tolerance policy for bullying and other forms of discrimination. On the rare occasions that bullying arises, immediate action is taken and the issues are dealt with. Those who have special educational needs study and socialise well with other students. There are very few exclusions because staff respond well to any incidents and deal with problems successfully.
- Students receive excellent guidance about how to stay safe when using the internet. They are aware of the potential issues related to social networking sites. Senior staff record and manage any incidents appropriately.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- There is capacity in this school to make the improvements required.
- The excellent drive of the principal is taking the school on a journey to at least good overall effectiveness, but there has not been time for the many new initiatives to be embedded and established as yet so their impact is not yet fully evident. Her enthusiasm and openness to advice is communicated well to other staff, especially the other leaders in the school. The senior leaders and governors have a shared passion for the relentless on-going improvements of the school.
- Self-evaluation, based on a wide range of evidence, is communicated to the staff.
- Not all curriculum leaders are following the policies and practice with enough rigour. As a result, there are some weaknesses in teaching that have not yet been tackled, in science, and this has limited students' achievement in this area.
- The previous external adviser to the school has secured a number of improvements over the five years of her tenure and has retired this year; the new adviser is aware of current government expectations and aims to provide critical and rigorous support.
- There are effective measures to check on the progress of individual learners and intervene when necessary, but the targets set for students have not been high enough in all subject areas. Consequently, students do not consistently make enough progress to maximise their potential.

- Performance management of the principal is rigorous and systems for the appraisal of staff, including links between performance and pay, are becoming established. However, the line management of staff is variable in quality. Structures are not yet tight enough across subjects to result in weaker teaching being eradicated. Some of the senior and middle leaders' assessment of teaching has been over generous and not focussed enough on the quality of students' learning over time.
- The school has developed good partnerships with agencies to support students, such as careers advice. Senior teachers with responsibility for students' welfare are vigilant and dedicated in providing good quality care for students who need specialist support. The improved achievement of the students eligible for pupil premium is an example of very effective leadership and management within the school. There is scope for this type of practice to be shared so that all other leaders can contribute in a similar way.
- The school provides an extensive curriculum with many opportunities for learning. Some of the changes to the curriculum that have taken place in the recent past have had a negative impact on results and the range of subjects and courses being offered is currently being reviewed. Leaders are aware that any future changes will need to be considered very carefully to ensure that they maximise achievement for all students.
- The sixth form curriculum is extensive and offers A level courses as well as a large variety of vocational learning and a foundation degree course in art and music technology is well established and successful.
- There are new initiatives in literacy and numeracy that are being established. The leadership of these areas is strong and is making some apt evaluation of the areas that need to be developed further. It is too soon to be able to measure the impact.
- The school effectively supports students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The students are provided with rich and varied experiences. At the time of the inspection, there was an outstanding display of artwork, open to all, done by sixth form and foundation degree students, as well as African drumming classes; these reflect the variety of opportunities available. The sixth form students had an induction day at the local University College of St Mark and St John; the lower school have an annual challenge week with enterprising, cultural and outdoor challenged themed activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors are committed to the school and passionate about their support. They are improving their understanding of how to gain a detailed picture through data and asking questions of how well students are achieving, especially in relation to other schools nationally. Governors are also developing their awareness of the quality of teaching across the school. They know the strengths and weaknesses of subject areas in the school and have taken strategic steps to consolidate and improve as necessary. The governing body has a full understanding of the spending of the pupil premium funding and its impact on the achievement of eligible students. However, the governing body does not yet have a detailed understanding of the school's systems for managing staff performance.  
The governing body fulfils its statutory duties including those related to safeguarding.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137206
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	412811

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1260
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	300
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Sharon Cox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Liz Dunstan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10–11 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 207907
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