

Torbay School

170B Torquay Road, Paignton, TQ3 2AL

Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Students do not yet make enough progress in English and mathematics. They are beginning to make better progress but this has not been for long enough.
- Teachers do not always plan precisely enough for small steps of learning so that individual students do not know exactly what to do to improve their work and make good progress in every lesson.
- Teachers in all subjects do not always have consistently high expectations of the pace and challenge for each individual.
- Some students are not able to manage their behaviour well enough to prevent it disrupting their learning and disturbing the learning of others.
- Leaders and managers have not yet made sure that the range of subjects at Key Stage 3 is taught well to provide opportunities for students to practise literacy and numeracy skills in an interesting and stimulating way.
- The governors and the headteacher have not yet made all the changes that are necessary for students to make sustained good progress with their learning over time.
- Leaders and managers know that teaching and students' progress have improved significantly in the last academic year but have not yet made sure that all teachers have sufficient opportunities to learn from colleagues with outstanding practice.

The school has the following strengths

- All Year 11 students who left the school in 2013 achieved GCSEs in English and mathematics and all have moved on to further training and education.
- Students say that this is the best school for them and is really helping them to improve.
- The headteacher and senior leaders including the governing body have an accurate view of the school and what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements.
- They have made sure that there is no longer any inadequate teaching or ineffective behaviour management in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 12 lessons at the school taught by 10 teachers. Four were joint observations with the deputy headteacher. Off-site alternative provision for Key Stage 4 students was visited and four sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher. A physical education lesson taking place in a local gymnasium was observed with the assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, a parent, a group of students, a representative of the local authority and Chair, Vice Chair and another member of the Governing Body. There were informal conversations held with students.
- The inspector looked at school documents, including data relating to assessment and students' progress, planning for school improvement and records about behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- As there was only one response to Parent View by the end of the inspection, the inspector considered a recent questionnaire undertaken by the school. The inspector received and analysed 17 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Janet Dinsmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school. All students have a statement for special educational needs for emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and many have additional difficulties including communication difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions. Many have been previously excluded from other mainstream and special schools and have experienced significant interruptions to their education.
- Almost all the students are known to be eligible for free school meals and therefore in receipt of the pupil premium (additional government funding). There is a much higher than average proportion of students looked after by the local authority. No students at the school are in receipt of the Year 7 catch-up premium.
- Nearly half the students arrive at the school at times other than would normally be expected.
- The headteacher started at the school in January 2012. He is also executive headteacher of all the pupil referral unit provision, across three separate sites, for the local authority. The school's behaviour specialist and some of the support staff also work in the pupil referral unit.
- The governing body was constituted and took over from an interim executive board in January 2012. There have been many changes in staff since the appointment of the headteacher.
- From September 2013 the school has been re-designated to provide places for students aged 11 to 16 only.
- The school uses alternative provision at South Devon College for all students in Years 10 and 11 for two days each week. Bicton College is also used. This is for students to attend courses in work-related training, for example mechanics, construction and catering.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that students make accelerated progress in all lessons by making sure that:
 - learning in all subjects is interesting so that all students are fully motivated to work hard
 - small steps of learning are clearly identified so that students and support staff know exactly what is expected in each lesson
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of individual students to give their learning sufficient pace and challenge
 - literacy and numeracy tasks in other subjects are well matched to students' abilities in English and mathematics, especially through reading and problem solving.
- Improve behaviour so that all students manage their own behaviour successfully in every lesson.
- Improve leadership and management of teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - the range of subjects at Key Stage 3 is taught in a stimulating way and supports students' progress in literacy and numeracy
 - teachers have sufficient opportunities to learn from colleagues who demonstrate outstanding practice.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students are not yet making the progress of which they are capable in English and mathematics for a sustained period of time. There is evidence that progress in the academic year 2012/13 is better and during that period a third of students made accelerated progress in these subjects.
- Progress in reading and writing, particularly at Key Stage 3, requires improvement because students do not have enough opportunities to practise these skills with work that is closely matched to their abilities, in a wider range of subjects.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use mathematical skills, particularly in problem solving, in other subjects.
- Students have opportunities to read in English lessons but they do not yet read widely and often because there are insufficient opportunities to read in other subjects.
- Students are beginning to make progress in understanding their behaviour and being able to control their reactions. This has resulted in accelerated progress in English and mathematics for some students but is not yet consistent across the school for all students.
- There is no difference in progress between those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and the very few other students at the school and there are no gaps in their attainment in English and mathematics.
- The most able students in this school do not always achieve as well as they could because there are insufficient opportunities for them to be challenged in their work. They make good progress with their behaviour and social skills and a few return to mainstream schools.
- Students make good progress in practical subjects, physical education and information and communication technology because the work is well organised and students enjoy them. Students in Key Stage 3 learn skills that prepare them well for work-related college courses in Key Stage 4 and when they leave school.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in practical and work-related skills as well as their personal and social skill development. They are well supported by school staff in alternative placements so that their skills can be practised in both settings. This forms highly effective preparation for transfer to college when they leave the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet closely matched to each individual student's learning needs in every lesson. Activities are not always interesting enough to motivate all students particularly in topic work in Key Stage 3.
- In class groups where there is wide range of ability, students report that tasks are too easy for some and too hard for others. Students do not always understand what they are learning or how to improve their work because it is not explained in enough detail.
- Teachers regularly check students' progress in English and mathematics and this is accurate but the precise points for improvement are not clear in all subjects. Tasks that use literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects are not closely matched to students' previous attainment so restricting opportunities to practise and develop them further.
- Support staff work closely with teachers and contribute well to enabling students to stay focused on learning. Sometimes the precise small steps of learning are not fully explained by teachers and understood by students so that this reduces the pace in the lesson and the effectiveness of support staff.
- Teachers and support staff are trained well to meet the emotional and behavioural needs of the students and plan to meet these well. Not all teachers know how to plan learning in a range of subjects, with pace and precision. Some have had insufficient opportunity to learn from outstanding teachers.

- Teachers and support staff know students very well and are skilful at adjusting individual learning in most lessons to minimise disruption and motivate students.
- Teachers of practical subjects have good subject knowledge and use this well in planning activities to motivate students and follow their interests enabling them to make good progress.
- Provision at the alternative placements enables students to learn new skills well and is effectively structured to enable students to be motivated well to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Some students are still not able to manage their behaviour well enough in lessons to prevent their learning being disrupted. Sometimes, students report, this disturbs the learning of others.
- Some students are not yet fully aware of the effect of their behaviour on others but there have been individual examples of significant improvements in this because of the meetings that are held to discuss incidents.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection but has not yet reached the average for special schools for a sustained period of time. The school is taking appropriate actions to promote good attendance and is working closely with families and other agencies for those who are frequently absent.
- Students feel safe at school and alternative placements. Students report that incidents of bullying are rare and are usually name calling. They are confident in staff's abilities to deal with these effectively. They know how to stay safe on the internet.
- The school has an effective system for recording behaviour throughout the school day. This is checked regularly by senior staff and there are daily discussions and good communication about the frequent changes in students' circumstances that may result in poor behaviour so that action can be taken to prevent these.
- Students take responsibility through their involvement in tutor sessions and making decisions and taking action to improve the environment of the school.
- The behaviour specialist and team of support staff check all incidents of poor behaviour rigorously and deal effectively with students' emotional and behavioural needs. Incident records show that serious incidents reduced significantly during the last academic year. Students say they are listened to and staff understand them and this is because there are high quality relationships at all levels across the school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have not so far been able to make sure that teaching is consistently good or better across the school to accelerate students' progress.
- While their impact is improving in terms of an accurate view of the school's performance and plans for further development, it is not yet good.
- The management of teachers' performance has eliminated inadequate teaching but has not yet been sufficiently rigorous for long enough to secure good progress for students in all subjects. Leaders have an accurate view of current teachers' skills and what needs to be done to improve them.
- The range of subjects and the way they are taught at Key Stage 3 is not yet closely matched to students' learning needs or giving them enough opportunities to practise literacy and mathematical skills alongside making progress in skills in other subjects. They do not do enough reading or problem solving in other subjects, for example.
- There are limited opportunities for students' cultural development but the strong sense of community and awareness of each other is contributing to students' spiritual development.
- Leaders and managers have a robust system for checking students' progress, attendance has improved and behaviour management is consistent across the school. This demonstrates that the current headteacher and leadership team have the capacity to improve the school.

- The partnership with the further education college is strong and has significantly contributed to the improved results for Year 11 students who left in 2012.
- The school works actively and effectively with health services, children’s services, the youth offending team and the police to make sure that everyone involved with the students and their families is fully aware of the progress they are making and factors that may be preventing this. Members of staff act as good advocates for the students making sure there are equal opportunities and no discrimination.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- The local authority has provided helpful support for the school over a number of years and continues to provide this for the current leadership team.
- The headteacher’s drive and vision for the school are now shared by all staff and this has resulted in increasing confidence among parents and the local community that the school is improving.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively to make sure that there have been improvements to the training of all staff to meet the complex emotional and behavioural needs of the students. This has made sure that serious incidents of behaviour have reduced, and attendance and teaching have improved so that students realise that achieving at school and in college is a worthwhile goal.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly experienced in their role and trained well to fully hold the school to account. They bring a good range of skills from their working lives including personnel management, the health service and finance. They receive regular reports in person from senior leaders and question and challenge them effectively. They know that the pupil premium has been spent to provide staff who have improved the attendance of students who were previously persistently absent. It has also been spent to help students to manage their behaviour more effectively and so accelerate their progress. They have made sure that the performance management of the headteacher at the school and in his wider executive role is managed well. They know that pay is directly related to teachers’ performance in the classroom. They know how the school compares to others of this type and how to check the information about students’ progress. They know that the quality of teaching has improved and there is now no underperformance. They comment that on their regular visits to the school, the quality of relationships and atmosphere in the school has changed completely since the arrival of the headteacher and that they are beginning to see the results of this in improved progress for students and the achievements of Year 11 who left in 2013.

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

Unique reference number	134126
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	426718

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iris Butler
Headteacher	James Evans
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2011
Telephone number	01803 665522
Fax number	01803 521915
Email address	admin@torbayschool.torbay.sch.uk

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