

Tiverton High School

Bolham Road, Tiverton, Devon, EX166SQ

Inspection dates 15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Not enough students make consistently good progress, including in mathematics. This trend is evident for most groups of students, including those who receive additional support.
- By the time that students leave the school in Year 11, the standards that they attain in GCSE and equivalent courses are too variable across different subjects. Standards of writing in subjects other than English are not consistently good.
- The quality of teaching over time has not been consistently effective in enabling all students to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Not all students are given sufficient challenge in their work because tasks are not always well matched to suit their different levels of ability.
- Teachers do not routinely use questioning effectively to check on how well students are progressing or to promote students' deeper levels of understanding.
- The quality of marking is extremely erratic; consequently, teachers' expectations of all students are not always high enough.
- Some leaders responsible for specific subjects are not fully effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching and of achievement in their areas is consistently good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have made sure that systems to track how well students achieve and how effective teaching is are robust and fit for purpose. The experienced and highly skilled headteacher provides strong leadership for the whole school community.
- Standards in some subjects, such as English and art, are high.
- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly in most areas. As a result, rates of progress for all groups are accelerating.
- The governing body is effective in ensuring that school leaders are held to account for the progress made by students. Governors provide the right balance of support and challenge.
- Students typically behave well, both in lessons and around the school campus. They reflect in their positive attitudes the school's strong commitment to valuing all adults and other students equally.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 51 part lessons were observed. Meetings were held with: senior leaders, including the headteacher; middle leaders, including those responsible for subjects; members of the governing body, including the Chair and four groups of students, covering the whole age range of the school. In addition, a telephone conversation took place between the lead inspector and a senior local authority officer.
- Inspectors looked at: planning and quality assurance documentation; documents relating to performance management arrangements; governing body minutes; assessment information and examples of students' work and a range of policy documents.
- There were 120 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. In addition, Ofsted questionnaires completed by 100 school staff were considered.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rob Isaacs	Additional Inspector
John Mallone	Additional Inspector
Marion Marks	Additional Inspector
Philip Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tiverton High School is larger than most secondary schools
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average at around one in five of the school roll. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average at just over one in ten.
- The school has specially resourced provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Five students with autistic spectrum difficulties are supported in the Communication and Interaction Resource Base, known as the CAIRB.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) is broadly average; this represents about one quarter of students in the school. About one-in-four Year 7 students who failed to reach the expected attainment levels in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 are supported through additional funding. This proportion is increasing.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- Around 60 students in each of Years 10 and 11 currently attend a local further education college (Petroc) for parts of the week to study a range of vocational courses.
- The school meets the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a cooperative trust (Tiverton Co-operative Learning Partnership) comprising local partner primary schools and Petroc.
- The headteacher also leads a small, local primary school, but that school is not linked to Tiverton High School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically good, by:
 - using the information that teachers have about students' previous learning to make sure that tasks are well matched to their different needs, abilities and aptitudes
 - providing all students with the right level of challenge in their work
 - making sure that teachers use questioning effectively to check on how well students are progressing or to promote deeper levels of understanding
 - making sure that written assessments of students' work are always regularly marked and provide them with clear guidance on how they can improve their learning and reach higher standards.
- Raise achievement so that it is typically good, by:
 - accelerating rates of progress for all groups of students in subjects where performance is weaker, including mathematics
 - improving the quality of writing across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that the effectiveness of all leaders responsible for subjects is as strong as the best, so that gaps in progress and attainment between the highest performing subjects and those where students currently achieve less well are reduced.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the majority of students have not made consistently good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Achievement in English has been notably stronger than in mathematics where rates of progress made during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were below those found nationally in both 2011 and 2012. In 2012, Year 11 students supported through the pupil premium and those supported through school action progressed much more slowly in mathematics than those groups of students nationally.
- The most able students progress at a similar rate to comparable students nationally overall, but in 2013, notably less well in GCSE mathematics than in English. Consequently, fewer achieved A or A* grades in mathematics than might have been expected given their starting points when they joined the school.
- Some students are entered early for GCSE mathematics in the autumn term of Year 11. However, these students are carefully targeted and if they are successful in gaining at least a grade C they are able to continue with their studies in mathematics and try to gain a higher grade if they are believed to have the potential to do so. Consequently, there is no evidence that the early entry policy disadvantages these students.
- The standards that students reach by the end of Year 11 in GCSE and equivalent courses have also varied across different subjects. Attainment in English and art has been consistently strong, whereas results in modern foreign languages, physical education and design and technology have been much lower.
- An increasing proportion of students begin Year 7 when they arrive at the school with low literacy levels, especially in writing. The school is developing a clear strategy to improve literacy levels quickly, making suitable use of the Year 7 catch-up funding. Nevertheless, standards of writing across the school generally (other than in English lessons) are not high enough, which restricts students' potential to achieve well in a range of subjects.
- All groups of students progress at broadly similar rates. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those catered for in the CAIRB, achieve in line with their peers.
- In 2012 (the most recent year for which there is validated achievement information), the gap in attainment between Year 11 students supported through the pupil premium and other students in the school was equivalent to just under a GCSE grade in English and just over a grade in mathematics. Inspection evidence, including the 2013 GCSE results, indicates that gaps are now beginning to narrow as a result of well-managed use of the additional funding, including the dual tutor system. This innovative strategy provides students in this group with intensive mentoring both to raise aspirations and improve their chances of reaching targets that will help to narrow attainment gaps with other students.
- Rates of progress for all groups are now accelerating as a result of improvements in some key aspects of teaching. In 2013, attainment at grades A* to C rose in several subjects, including French, science and mathematics.
- Students who take part in vocational courses in Key Stage 4 benefit both academically and socially from their studies, as do those who are supported in the CAIRB. This enables them to be well prepared to continue their education or training when they leave at the end of Year 11.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time not enough students consistently achieve well; moreover, the highly effective practice found in some high-performing departments is not seen consistently enough in subjects where standards are lower.
- Where teaching is not fully effective, teachers do not always make best use of the information that they have about students' previous learning to plan lessons which will stretch and challenge

all groups. In a significant minority of lessons seen during the inspection, the pace of learning slowed when teachers talked for too long or did not cater adequately for students' differing abilities and needs. In these lessons, over direction by the teacher became an obstacle to students making rapid progress.

- Teachers' ability to use questioning techniques to gauge how well students are responding to the tasks set is too variable in quality, as is the use of probing questions to promote depth of understanding.
- Although the school has made significant progress in improving the quality of spoken feedback given to students during lessons, the quality of marking is, too often, poor. Inspection evidence revealed that books in some subjects had not been marked for some time and in the case of students with low prior attainment, in particular, poor presentation had gone unchecked. This indicates that teachers' expectations of students are not always high enough. Even when marking was undertaken regularly, the provision of clear guidance on how students should improve their work is much too patchy. Variations in quality were seen both within and across different subjects.
- However, many examples of successful teaching were seen during the inspection and it is clear that, overall, teaching is improving strongly as a result of increasingly effective leadership. In a Year 11 art lesson, in which teaching was judged to be outstanding, the teacher displayed excellent subject knowledge and the ability to inspire very able students to produce high quality work on the theme of rhythms and cycles. In a Year 8 English lesson, effective questioning helped students to examine in detail complex texts, thereby promoting high level reading skills.
- Relationships between students and staff and between students and their classmates are consistently cordial and purposeful, creating a positive climate for learning. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to learning in most cases. Effective leadership of this strong team is helping to accelerate rates of progress for disabled students and those with special educational needs, in particular, including those in the CAIRB.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of students is good, both as seen in classrooms and during breaks and lunchtimes. They are generally polite, courteous and welcoming and show maturity when meeting adults, including visitors to the school.
- In the very few instances seen during the inspection when behaviour was less than good or attitudes to learning not entirely positive, it was due to weaknesses in teaching which failed to fully engage students.
- Students affirmed that the good conduct seen during the inspection is typical of what generally occurs and that standards have risen sharply over time. Inspection evidence confirms this picture as the use of sanctions, such as fixed-term exclusion, has declined since the previous inspection.
- The great majority of staff and of parents also subscribe to the view that good behaviour is the norm and that the school is a calm and orderly community.
- Students report that bullying is uncommon and, on those occasions when it does occur, is dealt with by staff in a timely and expedient fashion. This includes an increasing use of restorative justice principles which gives students greater scope to find their own solutions when problems with relationships occur.
- Students are knowledgeable about all forms of bullying, including homophobic and cyber bullying; they know how to keep themselves safe at school, on the adjacent college site and in their lives generally.
- The school's policy of avoiding the use of permanent exclusion means that an increasing proportion of students with known behavioural difficulties are on roll. However, highly skilled behaviour management, consistent application of school policies by staff and effective internal temporary removal procedures (known as 'parking') ensure that disruptions to learning are rare.
- The importance of regular attendance is rigorously promoted by staff and leaders; this is leading

to improving attendance rates.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides the school with strong and effective leadership. Staff, including leaders, are highly motivated and affirm their belief that they are well led. Staff are securely held to account for the quality of their work by leaders.
- Teachers' and leaders' development and training needs are clearly identified and integrated effectively into the school's performance management arrangements. The school's appraisal system is highly regarded by staff and many were able to give concrete examples of how they are improving their work in the classroom and as leaders.
- Senior leaders have correctly recognised that some leaders responsible for subjects are not as proficient as those who are most effective in ensuring consistently high quality teaching and good achievement for students. To rectify this, four of the strongest subject leaders are now in post as 'leaders of learning', working with clusters of other middle leaders. Although at a relatively early stage of development, there are clear indications that the quality of teaching in most of the relatively weaker subjects is beginning to improve.
- There is strong capacity to improve, reflected in the acceleration in improvements in teaching. Self-evaluation procedures are comprehensive and leaders have accurately and succinctly identified what needs to be improved. Systems to track how well students are making progress and the quality of teaching are well developed and effective.
- The school offers a wide selection of courses which meet the needs of the diverse range of students well. There is a good balance between academic and vocational subjects. In a well-managed reciprocal arrangement, college staff also teach on the school site. Leaders are responsive to national initiatives and, most importantly, the changing intake with students starting at the school with lower levels of literacy and numeracy skills. This has led to increasing the amount of teaching time for English and mathematics on the timetable. Plans are in place for Tiverton High School staff to provide teaching in local partner primary schools to help raise standards, a feature of the work of the cooperative trust. Provision for the arts is very strong and helps to promote both creativity across the curriculum and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The local authority has given useful support to the school over time, assisting especially in undertaking external monitoring of the quality of teaching and of standards of achievement. It also has given helpful feedback to the governing body on how well the school is progressing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body holds school leaders to account effectively. Inspection evidence shows that governors are prepared to ask challenging questions and that they are becoming increasingly confident and adept in analysing the school's achievement information and comparing it with other schools. This includes information pertaining to groups such as those students supported through the pupil premium. Governors are aware of how the school needs to improve and undertake regular checks at meetings on progress made towards meeting the objectives in the school's strategic plan. They know about some of the main strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and what the school is doing to secure improvement. They ensure that teachers' financial rewards are linked to how well students achieve and how teachers are improving their own effectiveness. The governing body discharges its statutory duties well, including ensuring that all students are safe and enjoy equality of opportunity.

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	113548
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	429588

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ali Lucas
Headteacher	Andrew Lovett
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2011
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