

# Tavistock College

Crowndale Road, Tavistock, Devon, PL19 8DD

**Inspection dates** 14–15 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Tavistock College has improved rapidly since its last inspection due to the very effective leadership of the Principal and her leadership teams.
- The quality of teaching has improved significantly so that all students typically achieve well in lessons.
- An increasing majority of students leave the college equipped with a good range of qualifications including in English, mathematics and science.
- Most students study a modern foreign language and achievement in Japanese is particularly high at GCSE level.
- Governance is strong. Governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths and areas for development and continue to hold leaders to account.
- The college is highly inclusive. Governors and college leaders have given the school a renewed identity based on strong values and high aspirations. Students respond well to the college ethos and their behaviour is good.
- The sixth form is good because the skilful teaching enables students to achieve well.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Improvement strategies put in place by the Principal have not all had time to have an impact on students' achievement.
- The most able students are not always given sufficient opportunity in lessons to tackle more difficult work that would enable them to achieve the highest grades.
- Students are often too reliant on their teachers who do not always encourage and support them to develop their skills as independent learners.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 54 lessons, some with members of the senior leadership team, and also looked at other activities within the college.
- They observed behaviour in lessons and around the college during breaks and after school.
- Inspectors talked to students about their work and their experience of college life.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, senior and middle leaders, with other staff and a group of governors. The lead inspector also talked to representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of college documents including safeguarding records, policies, self-evaluation and future plans, information about students' progress, monitoring records and the minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- By the end of the inspection, the views of 108 parents and carers who had responded to the online Parent View survey and the additional views of five parents and carers were collected and analysed. Inspectors also took into consideration the results of the college's own questionnaires from students, staff and parents and carers.

## Inspection team

Jacqueline Goodall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Malcolm Davison	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector
Marian Marks	Additional Inspector
Christine Young	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Tavistock College is larger than the average-sized secondary school. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The college serves a wide population from within and around Tavistock.
- The proportion of students for whom the college receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is just below the national average. Only a very small number of students come from service families.
- Around a sixth of all students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding which is for those who did not attain the expected levels in reading and mathematics at the end of primary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is just above average. The proportion of those who are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- A very small number of students attend provision supported by the Devon Personalised Learning Service. The provision is largely based in a location close to the college to facilitate liaison, monitoring and evaluation.
- The college is part of a cooperative trust involving the University of St Mark and St John in Plymouth, the Tavistock Chamber of Commerce and a group of 10 feeder primary schools.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Enable all students to achieve as highly as possible in all subjects by:
  - embedding and extending the most effective teaching skills already used in the college
  - supporting students to develop their confidence and ability to learn on their own, or with others, so they become less reliant on their teachers
  - ensuring that the most able students are regularly given more complex, open-ended tasks that challenge and enable them to achieve the highest grades possible
  - checking that all students follow up suggestions for improvement which teachers give through their very detailed marking.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- There has been a rising trend in GCSE results over the last three years although there was a fall in achievement in English results in 2013. This was partly because teachers had put too much focus on controlled assessments in English rather than preparation for the written examination. Reliable evidence shows that teaching and learning in English are currently at least good and that students are on course to achieve well at GCSE level in the future.
- College leaders have improved teaching in subjects where students have not been taught well so that they now make good progress in mathematics particularly, and in science, history and information and communication technology. The achievement of students in Key Stage 3 is in line with expectation and inspires confidence in their ability to realise their potential as they move up through the college.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs make particularly good progress because of the excellent support they receive.
- In 2013, the proportion of the top GCSE grades increased, reflecting higher expectations for the most able students. Nevertheless, this group does not achieve as well as other more able students across the country.
- Achievement in languages, the college's specialism, is improving rapidly, including in Japanese. A large proportion of students take a GCSE in languages which has contributed to around a third of all students achieving the English Baccalaureate qualification, which is a much higher proportion than the national average. The college is proud that one of the Japanese teachers has won the Teacher of the Year Award this year.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium or Year 7 catch-up funding are supported very effectively. For example, academic support coordinators have been appointed to focus on progress in English, mathematics and science. As a result of the strategies put in place, the gap between the achievement of this group of students and that of others is closing. In 2013, the gaps in English and mathematics were half and a full GCSE grade respectively. The gaps are much narrower for current students because they have benefited from a longer period of support. Those from service families achieve similarly to, or better than, other students.
- The very small number of students who attend the personalised learning centre make good or better progress. Their attendance, behaviour and achievement are tracked carefully.
- Students make very good progress in most courses in the sixth form and achieve particularly well in psychology, history and law. Standards in English and mathematics are in line with the national average, and because of improvements made to teaching in chemistry and religious studies, current students now achieve more highly in these subjects.
- A small percentage of students took GCSE mathematics early but this was an appropriate decision for these students and did not disadvantage them.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has risen significantly during the last two years and is usually good and sometimes outstanding.
- Students are taught very well in mathematics, English and science so that they are appropriately equipped for further study and later life.
- All teachers ensure that the whole-school focus on literacy is reflected in their lessons. All students are helped and encouraged to read often and widely, and there is an emphasis on the spelling of technical words, especially in science and technology.
- Teachers have a very detailed and accurate knowledge of how well every individual student is learning. Because of this, teaching is focused on helping students to make consistent progress towards their targets. In particular, students who are working at low levels in English and

mathematics or who have specific educational needs achieve very well.

- Students are helped to make progress in their learning through targeted questioning by teachers. Regular marking gives students clear suggestions about how to improve and in the best lessons, teachers involve students in a dialogue about their learning and always check that they make the improvements suggested; this is not consistent across all subject areas, however.
- To help students to focus on their lessons there is an emphasis on highly structured lessons. This sometimes limits students' capacity to direct their own learning which would enable them to become more independent learners. An increase in opportunities to tackle more open-ended tasks in which students decide what to do next would help them to grow in confidence.
- Similarly, the most able students in the school do not always achieve the highest grades possible because they are not challenged to think and work independently or given opportunities to focus on more complex questions or issues.

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

- The ethos in this college is now firmly based on the personal, social and moral values promoted by the governing body and college leaders. Students at the college are generally respectful and courteous. They are proud of their school and of their achievements within it.
- Attitudes to learning in lessons are good as students value what and how they are taught. Behaviour is not yet outstanding because there is a very small minority of lessons where behaviour does not promote learning. This is usually when lessons are less interesting or do not focus well enough on learning needs. Also, students are not sufficiently proactive or independent in their learning and this sometimes limits progress.
- The high expectations of students' behaviour are made clear from when they start in Year 7, and the effectiveness of support for students with behavioural needs is exemplary. The Forest School provision on site provides a real focus to re-engage learners and improve confidence and self-esteem. Opportunities to work with animals are provided to support and motivate students.
- Through a restructure of the support systems in the college, there has now been a significant fall in the number of exclusions. There is a very small number of students who are at risk of permanent exclusion but attendance at the nearby personalised learning unit ensures that their educational provision is maintained effectively.
- Attendance is improving. Last year a small number of Year 11 students were reluctant school attenders which affected the overall rates. Attendance is now similar to the national average.
- Students feel safe at the college and report that there is very little bullying, but when this does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Evidence of discriminatory behaviour or language is rare and students demonstrated that they understood the implications of different types of bullying such as homophobic.
- E-safety is promoted well and especially in information and communication technology lessons where safeguarding issues are discussed as well as the potential social implications of gaming.
- Although sixth form students would benefit from a more disciplined approach to private study, they model good standards of behaviour and attitudes around the college. They frequently take a lead on whole-school projects including raising money for charity, such as through the production of smoothies, powered by a static bicycle.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- This college is improving rapidly because of the unswerving commitment and determination of the Principal. She has created very strong senior and middle leadership teams which share and help to implement her uncompromising vision for the college. The capacity to further improve this school is strong.
- Leaders have an astute understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college's provision and have made substantial changes to college systems. A relentless pursuit of

improvement in teaching and learning has included taking swift action to eradicate inadequate teaching. The fall in English results in 2013 was analysed immediately and steps were taken to adjust the leadership of the faculty and the structure of the course.

- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because although these changes have resulted in major improvements in all areas, there has not been time for them to have a full impact on GCSE results, particularly in English, and the achievement of the most able students.
- A highly effective and valued staff training programme is in place, including opportunities to conduct research. There is a culture of sharing good practice and middle leaders have become increasingly skilled in improving the performance of teachers.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and improving. Teaching and learning are often outstanding. There are plans in place to improve retention rates through changes to the curriculum from next year and reducing the number of courses with low numbers of students.
- The curriculum is focused on ensuring all students leave with a range of valued and suitable qualifications through, for example, vocational courses such as construction and public services. There is also an extensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer that provide many opportunities for social, cultural, artistic and musical development. Students can study further GCSE courses or engage in activities such as urban dance, the film club or first aid. There are many visits overseas, including to Japan.
- The college offers an impressive range of activities to raise aspirations, especially for the most able, including residential trips to universities from Year 7 through to Year 13.
- Relationships between the college and parents and carers are now stronger and liaison with the families of more vulnerable students has been particularly effective. The school's analyses and the response to the Parent View online survey show that the majority of parents and carers agree that the college is providing a safe and effective education. One parent or carer remarked on the 'real and remarkable changes' in the college; another valued the 'creativity, care and inspirational teaching'.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is a strength of the college. For example, Year 13 students study research into happiness in psychology, Year 10 students learn about recycling and sustainability in product design and Year 8 students develop emotional literacy in tutor time. There are many motivational and thought provoking displays around the college. Assemblies offer opportunities to reflect on life issues including the recent Philippines typhoon disaster.
- Partnerships with the community have increased in number and impact. The cooperative trust has brought about productive links with businesses and organisations. Interview days for Key Stage 4 students are now well supported by businesses and the university has organised training for community volunteers to mentor students and support their literacy development.
- The local authority has given a great deal of support to this college over the last few years and now recognises the improvement in the educational provision.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has become resilient in its quest to restore confidence in this school within the community. It has accelerated improvement in teaching and learning by recruiting only the strongest leaders and teachers. Governors know the college's strengths and remaining areas for development very well and hold the Principal to account for improvement.
- Governors track the achievement of students through the focused and detailed information provided by the Principal. Governors ensure that every student is treated equally and is given opportunities to succeed, including those eligible for pupil premium funding. Governors attend faculty reviews to see how teaching and learning are monitored and improved.
- They are taking steps to ensure that the new staff appraisal and pay policies will have a positive impact on students' achievement; they are already experienced in tackling underperformance.
- Governors ensure that all statutory duties are met, including those for safeguarding and child protection arrangements. The college's finances are now secure.

## 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>	113539
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	426789

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<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>	1,294
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	297
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Salmon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1–2 December 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01822 614231
<b>Fax number</b>	01822 612030
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@tavistockcollege.devon.sch.uk



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