

Westlands School

Westlands Lane, Torquay, TQ1 3PE

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching is uneven and leads to students' inconsistent achievement across subjects. In particular, students are not making enough progress in mathematics.
- Girls and the most able students are not progressing as well as they should because their aspirations and teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough in too many lessons.
- Not all teachers are skilled in using assessment to set work at the right levels, to check that all students are making good progress in the lesson and to challenge students to think at a higher level.
- Teachers' marking does not consistently provide precise guidance to enable students to know what to do to improve their work.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is not challenging students to make good progress.
- Some middle leaders are not monitoring, evaluating and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects effectively.
- Not all governors understand fully the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to hold senior leaders to account for the standards that students reach.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving and previous inadequate teaching has been tackled successfully by senior leaders.
- GCSE results are improving. They are above average in English and science.
- Disabled students, those with special educational needs and students supported by the pupil premium make good progress.
- The headteacher is setting high expectations of the staff. Staff morale is high due to her clear direction and provision of relevant training and support.
- Senior leaders and some middle leaders are making sure that new systems are being carried out by all staff, including procedures for assessing students' progress and marking their work.
- The interim Chair of Governors is improving governance through a rigorous action plan.
- Good leadership of the sixth form is improving students' achievement consistently across subjects and courses.
- Behaviour and students' safety are managed well and students have positive attitudes to learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons taught by 20 teachers, almost all of which were observed jointly with senior staff. Five of the lessons were of sixth form classes. Inspectors also heard a small group of students reading.
- The inspectors held meetings with groups of students, teachers, senior and middle leaders, the interim Chair of Governors and the National Leader of Education who is supporting the school's improvement. They held a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They examined a range of documents, including information on students' progress, attendance and behaviour, the quality of teaching, school improvement planning and the safeguarding of students.
- The inspectors examined students' work, including that of students in the sixth form.
- The inspectors took account of 20 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and the school's own survey, and questionnaires completed by 44 teachers and support staff.

Inspection team

Sue Frater, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Joseph Skivington

Additional Inspector

Svetlana Bajic Raymond

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has left and an acting headteacher was in post until the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2014. The Chair of Governors has also left and a National Leader of Governance has been appointed as interim Chair of Governors. Staffing, including the senior leadership team, has been re-structured.
- The school is due to become a sponsored academy in June 2015. The sponsor is Ivybridge Academy Trust. The executive headteacher of the Trust is a National Leader of Education and has been supporting the school's improvement.
- Westlands School is larger than most secondary schools. It is a bilateral school, having a selective stream of students in addition to a comprehensive intake. It also has a sixth form and hosts the local authority's resource base for hearing impaired students.
- The number of students eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for children in the care of the local authority and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The large majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average. Their needs relate mainly to physical disability and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- A very small number of students with medical conditions attend alternative provision through Education Other Than in School.
- 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, including in the sixth form, so that all students make consistently good progress in lessons, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations and students' aspirations of what students, especially girls and the most able, can achieve in lessons
 - developing teachers' use of assessment to set work at the right levels of challenge for all students and to adapt the lessons to maintain a good rate of learning for all
 - making sure that teachers consistently challenge students to think at a higher level than in previous lessons
 - ensuring teachers' marking provides precise guidance to enable students to know what to do to improve their work.
- Raise achievement, especially for girls, the most able students and in mathematics.
- Improve middle leaders' skills in monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good across all subjects, including in mathematics.
- Build on the previous review of governance by ensuring governors:
 - understand their strategic role
 - develop their monitoring skills to enable them to gain an accurate overview of the school
 - hold senior leaders to account for the standards that students reach.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because middle leadership is too variable and leads to an uneven quality of teaching and students' achievement across subjects. Subject leaders are beginning to hold teachers to account for their students' progress. However, their own practice is not always good enough for them to train and support the teachers in their departments. Subject leaders are developing appropriate skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning through lesson observations, examining students' work, analysing progress data and discussing progress with the students. They are benefitting from, and welcome, recent visits to other schools to see good practice.
- The new headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school and has set clear expectations of the staff. She quickly gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and identified the key priorities for school improvement, including the quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher and senior leaders evaluate the school improvement plan rigorously. They are making sure that new policies and procedures are followed consistently and effectively by all staff.
- The restructuring of the senior and middle leadership teams has ensured that all posts contribute to students' achievement. For example, heads of year now maintain an overview of students' progress in all subjects.
- Underpinning the improvements in students' achievement is the school's system for monitoring students' progress. This is becoming more reliable as senior and middle leaders are involving teachers more systematically in checking the accuracy of their assessments. Leaders identify any underperforming individuals or groups of students and make sure that they are given appropriate support to help them to catch up with the other students. However, not all teachers are using the data to plan lessons that challenge all students to make good progress.
- Teaching is improving as a result of effective management of teachers' performance and professional development and training. Performance management is linked appropriately to the teachers' standards and students' achievement. Teachers are motivated to improve their practice by visits to successful schools and the sharing of good practice within the school.
- The school's focus on developing students' basic skills in reading and writing contributes to good progress in English. It also helps to secure improvements in the achievement of disadvantaged students.
- The use of the pupil premium for additional support such as mentoring and developing basic skills is helping disadvantaged students to catch up with others in the school and nationally.
- The curriculum, including in the sixth form, is being reviewed to meet the needs and aspirations of all the students. It includes academic and vocational subjects. The wide range of opportunities for sport helps to develop students' physical well-being. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example through links with a school in Uganda. Students are prepared appropriately for life in modern Britain, for example by exploring different beliefs and values. Senior leaders have identified the need to link the students to a school in Britain with students from more diverse backgrounds. The curriculum promotes good behaviour and a good understanding of safety matters, such as e-safety.
- Staff work well with parents, including those who might find working with the school difficult, to achieve positive benefits for students. For example, the special educational needs co-ordinator, the specialist teacher for the hearing impaired and the teacher in charge of the learning intervention centre help parents to support their children's learning and this contributes to the students' good progress.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination well.
- Senior leaders monitor rigorously the progress, attendance and behaviour of students attending the alternative provision through good links with the staff.
- School staff are trained regularly and well in child protection procedures. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.
- Effective leadership of the sixth form is improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning and of students' achievement.
- Improved advice and careers guidance are helping students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to choose appropriate next steps in education, employment or training.
- The local authority has brokered effective support for the school through the National Leader of Education and, more recently, the National Leader of Governance. It provided suitable governor training, such as on safeguarding, and funds to support the school's action plan. It is also supporting the school's transition to a sponsored academy by contributing to the steering group that is planning this change. The staffing structure, systems and improvements that are now established are preparing the school well for its

transition to academy status.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- did not follow up its external review by establishing clear roles and responsibilities for all governors, so too few governors are carrying out the work of the governing body
- does not understand fully its strategic role and that this is not an operational role
- uses a range of information, including external reports and information on students' progress, to gain an understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, but governors do not systematically visit the school to see its performance for themselves.
- does not have an accurate overview of the school's performance to be able to hold senior leaders to account for the standards that students reach
- is beginning to improve because the recently appointed interim Chair of Governors has a clear plan of action to improve its effectiveness
- understands the performance management of staff and what is done to reward good teaching and to tackle underperformance
- supports senior leaders in reviewing regularly the deployment of staff and resources to ensure finances are managed efficiently; governors know how effectively the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are used to close previous gaps in students' learning and enable them to catch up with their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students' attitudes to learning, including in the sixth form, are consistently positive and support the progress they are now making. Students are eager to learn and they bring the right equipment to lessons.
- Students respond very quickly to teachers' requests in lessons. Senior and other staff 'on call' make sure that lessons are not disrupted by minor incidents of poor behaviour.
- There are no well-founded concerns expressed by parents, staff and students about behaviour and safety. Students know the importance of good behaviour in school, adult life and work.
- Good working relationships between students and with their teachers create a positive environment in and around the school. Students conduct themselves well at different times of the day, including at lunchtime. They are punctual to lessons and their attendance is improving.
- Students take pride in their work, although not all books are well presented. Students look smart in their uniform and they are proud of their school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It includes detailed risk assessments.
- Students learn about different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. There are few instances of bullying and these are dealt with effectively by the school.
- Leaders and teachers, and especially those in the learning intervention centre, evaluate students' behaviour and help individuals with particular behavioural difficulty. The evidence shows significant improvements for many of these pupils.
- Students, including in the sixth form, say they feel safe in school and at the alternative provision. They know how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because teaching over time in most subjects is uneven. As a result, most students do not achieve well over time, especially in mathematics, because there are too many gaps in their learning. Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and disadvantaged students make good progress now. Teaching assistants provide effective support and teachers give clear explanations that help the least able students.
- Teachers, including those in the sixth form, do not have high enough expectations of the most able students and do not challenge them to think at the higher levels. Consequently the most able students do not make good progress. Teachers are not raising the aspirations of girls, although they help pupils who

are less able to develop a range of skills across the curriculum, including reading, writing and communication. They are beginning to develop students' skills in mathematics across subjects.

- Not all teachers are skilled in using assessment to plan work at the right levels for students' different starting points. Nor are they all checking students' understanding during lessons, addressing misconceptions and adapting their questions, the tasks or the pace, according to the students' different learning needs.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations. They constantly assess students' understanding and adjust their lessons accordingly. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson for more able students, the students were challenged to investigate the use of surds and to apply the rules in their calculations. The learning objectives were aimed at students' various targets. The teacher constantly checked the students' understanding. He encouraged those who understood quickly to deepen their knowledge through more difficult examples. For those who needed more help, he demonstrated strategies on the whiteboard, asking questions to check and extend their understanding. Students clearly enjoyed this challenging lesson, which extended their thinking. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high in all mathematics lessons.
- Most teachers and teaching assistants, including in the sixth form, create a positive climate for learning in their lessons and students are typically interested and engaged.
- Teachers assess students' progress regularly. The accuracy of assessments is improving due to regular checks with other teachers. Teachers' marking is too variable. There are some good examples of marking, with clear evidence of students' response. In many cases, feedback is not precise enough to help students to know what to do to improve their work.
- Teachers are developing more effective strategies, including setting appropriate homework and well-targeted support and intervention.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects is not consistently strong and this is confirmed in students' books. Students make good progress in English and achieve well. Students do not make good progress in mathematics because teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough.
- From each different starting point, the number of students making and exceeding expected progress in English is above national figures. It is below national figures in mathematics.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged students are improving in relation to those of other students nationally and in the school. The proportion of disadvantaged students making expected progress is improving in relation to other students nationally and in the school for both English and mathematics. In English, students are now less than half a GCSE grade behind others in the school. In mathematics, students are now less than a GCSE grade behind, and the gap between their attainment and that of other students in the school is closing over time.
- The most able students do not progress as well as other students in the school, including the sixth form, because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Girls do not progress as well as boys because their aspirations are lower and the school has only recently taken action to raise their aspirations.
- Disabled students, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged students make good progress. Senior leaders check students' progress carefully and identify individuals and groups who are underperforming. Appropriate support is provided.
- Students in the local authority's resource base for hearing impaired students also make good progress and achieve well, due to the specialist support they receive while in the base and in lessons in the school.
- Students in Years 7 and 8 read widely and often, using a reading scheme. Students throughout the school read across subjects.
- Students' learning is uneven across subjects. However, they develop and apply a wide range of skills in reading, writing and communication which prepare them well for the next stage in their education, employment or training. The development of mathematics skills across the curriculum is too recent to see any evidence of impact.
- In English, attainment has been rising at a faster rate than nationally over a three-year trend. In mathematics, attainment has been rising more slowly than nationally.
- Early entry for GCSE is used in English and mathematics. However, students are given the opportunity to re-take the examinations to attain a higher grade. The school is rightly reviewing this process to ensure that more able students have access to the highest grades.
- Students who attend alternative provision achieve well, due to the specialist provision that is made for them.

The sixth form provision requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because teachers are not challenging the students to think and evaluate at a high enough level to promote their good progress.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and provide helpful feedback on students' work. Their expectations are not always high enough, as some students are already working above their predicted target grades.
- Achievement is improving and students now make adequate, but not yet good, progress consistently across all courses and most subjects. They apply a range of skills effectively in their learning, for example research, discussion and presentation. They make good use of technical vocabulary. Students' destinations appropriately include university, employment and apprenticeships. The number of students who leave the school not in education, employment or training is reducing.
- The small group of students who took GCSEs in English and mathematics attained grade C, which is a higher grade than their previous results.
- Students display positive attitudes to their work. They are keen to learn and engage well in their lessons. They work productively together, supporting each other's learning. Their attendance is improving. The retention rate is also improving.
- Good leadership and management of the sixth form has led to consistent and improving teaching and learning. Achievement, especially for disadvantaged students, is monitored closely and shows a rising trend over time. Support for individual students at risk of falling behind is swift and effective. Disadvantaged students are provided with suitable resources such as laptops and opportunities to visit higher education institutions. Attendance and personal well-being are also monitored closely and appropriate support is provided where necessary. While improvements in attendance and retention are slow, they are heading in the right direction.
- Students feel safe and well supported by the sixth form team and their tutors. They value the wide range of opportunities to develop their personal well-being, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Ten Tors Challenge, World Challenge and rugby tournaments. Their social and cultural development is extended by studying with a cohort of European international students who join the sixth form each year.
- Students take either an academic or vocational route, or a combination of both, and can select from a wide range of subjects. Information, advice and guidance have improved, resulting in fewer students changing courses. In addition, the admission criteria have been raised. These two factors are helping to improve retention rates.
- Many students are involved in work-related activity, community work, supporting younger students in the school, voluntary work and part-time jobs. The system for recognising students' personal, social and employability skills does not track their progress well enough.

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	113526
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	447433

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,224
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Alex Newton
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 June 2013
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