

# Mount Tamar School

Row Lane, Higher St Budeaux, Plymouth, PL5 2EF

**Inspection dates** 4–5 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The leadership team is new to its role and new initiatives to improve teaching and behaviour and raise achievement have not yet had enough time to have sufficient impact.
- Leaders have not yet made sure that all students achieve well in English and mathematics, or that teaching is consistently good.
- A minority of students do not have positive attitudes to school or behave well enough. Their actions sometimes impact on the learning and achievement of others.
- Attendance is lower than in other similar schools and not all students attend regularly enough to make good progress.
- Teaching is too variable and expectations of achievement and behaviour are often low.
- The behaviour and achievement of students in the off-site provisions are not always good enough to enable them to make good progress.
- A high proportion of staff and parents who responded to the inspection questionnaires agree that achievement and behaviour at the school are not yet good.
- The quality of food and drink in the residence is not always of a high standard.
- The physical environment in the residence is not good throughout.
- Monitoring processes in the residence are not developed well enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Governors have made sure that those students who receive additional funding benefit from it so that they make better progress than their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Achievement in reading is improving, particularly in the primary department, due to the introduction of a new phonics programme (the sounds that letters make).
- Achievement in science is particularly strong and several students acquire GCSEs in this subject.
- College links are effective and provide opportunities for good vocational education.
- Students all acquire some Functional Skills accreditation, GCSEs at A\*-G and other good qualifications by the time they leave Year 11.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and pupils feel safe.
- The overall effectiveness of the residence is good and the school meets the national minimum standards for residential schools.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed students' learning in 11 lessons. The inspectors carried out all of the observations jointly with the senior leaders. The inspectors also listened to some primary students reading during their lessons.
- Inspectors spoke to several different groups of students on three sites about their work and about their school. There were no students at the fourth site during the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, the chair, the chair of finance and a parent governor from the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the work of the school, visited off-site provisions and looked at a range of documents. These included the school's own information about students' progress, planning and monitoring documents, safeguarding information and students' work.
- The inspectors took account of 17 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View. They also considered the 35 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Denise Morris, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Robert Arnold

Additional inspector

Norma Welsby

Social Care inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school caters for students who are supported by a statement of special educational needs for their behaviour, social and emotional difficulties and their associated learning difficulties. It is based on four different sites across Plymouth. There are currently no children at the school under the age of five.
- About a quarter of students also have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after.
- Most students arrive with a history of low attendance and many are disengaged from learning.
- A wide range of external providers are used to provide vocational education for students in Years 10 and 11 who are supported by the school for up to five days each week.
- There have been a high number of staff changes and absences in the past two years. Several teachers and teaching assistants are relatively new.
- The governing body has received an external review since the last inspection. Several members are new and there is not yet a full governing body.
- The headteacher is new to the school since the last inspection and the senior management team is in the early stages of carrying out its leadership roles.

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

- Improve the impact of leadership by ensuring regular checks on students' progress, attendance, and behaviour across all four sites.
- Raise achievement in English and mathematics by providing training for all staff to ensure that teaching is consistently good.
- Improve the behaviour of the minority of students whose actions impact on the learning of others.
- Work with students, families and support services to ensure that all students attend school regularly.
- In the residence, review the quality, variety and availability of food and drink to ensure these are of a consistently good standard.
- Ensure the physical environment in the residence provides good standards throughout.
- Develop monitoring processes across the residence to ensure these contribute effectively to ongoing improvements.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Steps taken by the headteacher to improve achievement and teaching since his arrival 18 months ago have not all been effective. This is because of huge changes to staffing and the lack of previous data on students' achievements. He has introduced new systems to monitor students' achievements, behaviour and attendance but as yet these have not had a significant impact on students' outcomes.
- Leadership and management of teaching has not been strong enough to promote rapid progress or to improve students' behaviour and personal development.
- Leaders know that there is much to do to develop staff skills so that outcomes for students improve. The school's evaluation of its performance is accurate and indicates that teaching and achievement require improvement.
- Attendance overall is too low. Procedures to improve attendance are not yet having an impact. Students sometimes arrive late for lessons and are not reminded about their punctuality.
- The behaviour of some more challenging students often disrupts learning for others and evidence of improvements in students' behaviour and attitudes over time is limited.
- Middle leaders are new to leadership. They are beginning to lead their areas appropriately so that they are better placed to have an impact on improving literacy and numeracy.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school and designates it as one that requires support. Representatives of the local authority make regular visits to check the quality of students' achievements and their behaviour, offering high quality support to leaders. A recent monitoring report by the local authority indicated that teaching and achievement at the school required improvement.
- About half of the parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire are not pleased with their children's progress or their behaviour.
- The management of staff performance is improving, with well-chosen training increasingly meeting the needs of staff and students. For example, recent training for the teaching of phonics in the primary department has led to improvements in reading. This is just beginning to help younger students improve their reading and writing.
- Targets are now being set for all teachers that relate closely to the progress that students make. Increases in salary are linked to whether teachers fully meet these targets, although it is too early to judge the impact of this process.
- A broad range of subjects is available to students. All students enjoy sport, and in the main school, art is also very popular. Students achieve well in this subject and quickly improve. Students' pathways for learning are chosen through discussion which sets personal learning and achievement milestones. Therapy has been introduced recently and successfully supports students' personal needs.
- Students benefit from an effective range of visits and themed days that contribute well to their physical skills and their personal development. A recent trip to Spain by older students as well as effective links with local cultural centres, supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The school provides an appropriate range of activities to develop students' awareness of British values and prepares them for life in modern Britain. An example of this is the regular visits to the local shops and taking part in community activities, both at school and in the residence. Also the introduction of purposeful outdoor activities has helped to widen students' experiences and independence. These opportunities help to improve students' attitudes and awareness of safety.
- Leaders check students' individual achievements so that they are fully aware of who needs additional support. This is now provided for those who are falling behind in English and mathematics so that they are beginning to catch up with their peers.
- Students' work is assessed by staff, who provide some helpful comments to aid improvement. However, school leaders are still developing their preferred method of assessment.
- Leaders have begun to check the achievement, behaviour and attendance of all students on each site and during off-site activities, college provision and work experience. The checks have had a positive impact on reducing exclusions but as yet this has not had an impact on students' achievements or attendance.. Good careers advice is available to older students.
- Leaders make sure that all students have equal opportunities through the appropriate curriculum. Students learn about different cultures and faiths through visits and assemblies. There is no evidence in documentation, or in the school, of any discrimination.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to provide additional support and extra resources for eligible students, including a range of therapies. These students receive good support and guidance from

teaching assistants and most make better progress than their classmates in English and mathematics.

- Sports funding is used well to enable students to join in with team games against other schools. This has helped to improve students' physical skills as well as their personal development.
- The impact of careers guidance for older students is effective because it helps them make the right choice of college courses to help their future employment opportunities.
- A wide range of therapies, including speech, behavioural, art, music and occupational therapy are provided for students with autistic spectrum disorders, and staff have received training in approaches to autism. As a result the personal development of these students is just beginning to improve.
- Safeguarding procedures at the school and in the off-site provisions meet current requirements and are effective. All staff receive training to identify students at risk of harm, and procedures to ensure students' safety are clearly stated.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has improved since the last inspection because the governing body has undertaken an external review. This has ensured that their skills have developed and that they now have the knowledge to challenge leaders. As yet, however, this has not impacted on improvements for all students. There are some vacancies on the governing body. This impacts on the amount of support that governors can provide to the school. Governors themselves say that they do not yet have a team approach. They say that the new headteacher is trying hard to establish links through weekly newsletters, and that these are helpful. Governors are aware that teaching, achievement and behaviour require further improvement and are working closely with leaders to try to ensure this. They ensure that the performance of staff is regularly checked and are funding regular training for staff. Members understand the school's performance data and compare these with those of other similar schools. Financial management is rigorous. Governors make the best use of additional funding to support those students for whom it is intended.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils

### require improvement

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Despite some emerging improvements recently, too many students do not behave well enough in lessons. The learning of some students is disrupted by the poor behaviour of others, in school and in the off-site units.
- School records indicate that behaviour incidents and short-term exclusions are beginning to decrease. Exclusions, for example, have decreased by a third recently. This is due, in part, to the introduction of a system to track students' behaviour and set targets for improvement. Closer links with parents are also having a positive impact.
- Students told inspectors that there is some bullying at the school but they understand what to do obtain assistance. They know about the different kinds of bullying and know who to turn to for help. Provision to ensure safety on the internet is fully in place.
- The recording of any incidents is thorough and information about actions taken is checked regularly.
- Students' attitudes to their learning and to staff are variable and at times this results in disruptions to learning. This is particularly evident in the off-site units.
- Students know about right and wrong and understand the school's balanced approach to a broadly Christian religious education, which also includes other world faiths.
- Attendance is low overall. Not all students, particularly those in the off-site provisions and those in the secondary department, attend often enough. Several students transfer to the school from Pupil Referral Units and have very low expectations for attendance. Rewards are offered for high attenders but are not offered to those whose attendance improves. Overall attendance is below that seen in other similar schools nationally
- Students behave well on their college courses and on their work experience placements.
- Students in the primary department attend well.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Policies and procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of students are effective. As a result, students feel safe. Leaders ensure that students have a clear view of risk and know how to deal with it. Effective risk assessments are fully in place for any out-of-school trip or visit. Individual needs are well planned for.

- Students have a good understanding of risks and learn how to deal with them. For example, some students are learning to travel to school independently.
- Students told inspectors that they understand how to stay safe on the internet.
- The behaviour and safety of students attending alternative provision, such as at college, and on trips are well monitored.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is too variable across the school. There are examples of good teaching where students are challenged and make good progress, particularly in subjects such as science, art and design, and in design technology. However, overall, teaching does not enable students to make consistently good progress in English and mathematics from their low starting points. This is evident in students' books, where there is variability in the amount and quality of work seen.
- Learning and achievement in writing are too low. This was evident in Years 10 and 11, where students revising for their GCSE examinations lacked stimulating tasks, dictionaries or word lists to help their writing skills develop. As a result, they could not show what they could achieve or apply their learning by themselves.
- In mathematics, students in Years 9 to 11 were not challenged well enough by the work set, the tasks being too easy for them. Lack of appropriate resources to support students had a negative impact on their learning and their behaviour.
- Expectations in lessons are not always high enough to ensure that students work at a fast enough rate and improve their knowledge and skills. As a result, progress over time is limited.
- The teaching of reading has improved over the past year due to the introduction of daily reading. A new phonics programme introduced into the primary department is helping younger students to improve their reading and enjoy books. Their enthusiasm was evident as they dressed up to enjoy 'World Book Day' during the inspection.
- Teachers regularly check and mark students' work. They mainly give verbal feedback and also provide some helpful written comments for those who can read. Students given ideas, respond to improve their work in literacy and numeracy.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Regular therapies ensure that this group of students achieve at least as well as their classmates.
- Teachers do not always manage students' behaviour well enough. They monitor and track behaviour regularly. However, disruptions to learning caused by students' behaviour are not always managed well.
- Teachers set additional work for the most able students to challenge them to do their best. This ensures that most of them achieve their targets.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students enter the school with below-average standards. This is because of gaps in students' education due to their behaviour, social and emotional difficulties. Many have had poor experiences at their previous schools and a minority are not well prepared for learning or to attend regularly.
- The achievement of older students in the main school is variable because teaching is not always linked closely enough to their individual abilities. As a result, not all students make the progress expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. At times, work is too easy for some and too difficult for others. As a result, their progress dips.
- The achievement of students in the off-site provisions is often limited by the short time that students are at school. Many attend for only part of each week due to their social and emotional difficulties. This impacts on their achievements. Work provided for them does not always challenge them well enough to improve their progress.
- Students' learning in classes across the school is often limited by the challenging behaviour exhibited by some students. However, the majority of students settle and start to learn and begin to attend school more regularly than in the past.
- In the primary department, students benefit from very small classes and very high levels of support. Primary aged students enjoy school. The recent introduction of a programme to improve their reading skills is beginning to have a positive impact on their learning and self-esteem.
- Disadvantaged students across the school typically achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. This is due to regular and effective support and because of the good range of resources and activities that are provided for them. Their progress is usually better than that of other students in the

school.

- Achievement in science is particularly strong and several students acquire GCSEs in this subject. The most able students make good progress in mathematics and science. In the most recent examinations, some of the most able students in Year 11 attained GCSEs in mathematics and science. There are some early entries to GCSE mathematics by students in year 10. This enables them to benefit from extra time for other examinations when they enter Year 11. It also allows them to re-sit mathematics if they do not achieve their expected grades
- The school's own data show that not all students across the school make the progress expected of them in English and mathematics. As a result students' progress in these subjects requires improvement.
- The outstanding outcomes achieved by the small number of students in the residence, impacts positively on their education. In particular residential students attend school regularly. They read with residential staff in the evenings. They use the practical skills learned in the residence to improve their food preparation and cooking at school.

<b>Outcomes for residential pupils</b>	<b>are outstanding</b>
<b>Quality of residential provision and care</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Residential pupils' safety</b>	<b>is good</b>
<b>Leadership and management of the residential provision</b>	<b>are good</b>

- A very small number of students stay at the residence each week. The residential service is very well managed and is seen as a valuable resource for all pupils that use it. Leadership and management are better than in the main school because the residence impacts very positively on individuals' outcomes at school and at home. There is excellent communication between pastoral and academic staff, which supports the needs of individuals very well.
- Outcomes for residential pupils are outstanding and they are very positive about the residence, saying they 'really love it'. These comments are echoed by parents, who also report significant progress made by their children since using the residential service. For example, they demonstrate lots of improvement in confidence, social skills and in being able to perform a range of practical tasks, such as teeth cleaning and bed making.
- Relationships with care staff are excellent. Pupils feel that their carers know them very well and have their best interests at heart. Pupils engage enthusiastically with the residential experience, enjoying the wide range of social and recreational opportunities it provides.
- Residential pupils understand and engage positively with the incentive scheme used by the residential service. This results in excellent behaviour, with young people learning to be respectful of staff and each other.
- Leadership and management of the residence are good because the long-standing and experienced head of care ensures that students are well cared for, nurtured and supported extremely well. Leaders place the safety and well-being of all individuals at the centre of their practice. Good leadership has ensured that staff are well trained, knowledgeable and experienced in responding to safeguarding and child protection concerns. Residential pupils say they feel safe and incidents of being missing from care are rare, as is the use of restraint. Some sanctions are used but these are meaningful and a natural consequence of inappropriate behaviour.
- Residential pupils enjoy nurturing care and established evening routines. They are encouraged to embrace healthy lifestyles. For example, they really enjoy the activities available to them, including onsite activities such as playing pool and using scooters in the grounds. They also enjoy opportunities to visit local facilities to do swimming, diving and bowling.
- The evening meal is very much part of the quality social time they spend together. Staff eat with young people and encourage stimulating conversation and good manners. Residential pupils' comments about the quality, variety and availability of food and drink are varied, with breakfast and after-school snacks being particularly identified as providing scope for improvement.
- The residential service provides a safe and functional environment. However, its layout and standard of comfort do not reflect the really nurturing and homely service it provides. There are plans to extensively upgrade and refurbish the whole of the residential provision, which is welcomed by pupils and staff alike.
- While regular monitoring of the residential service is undertaken, these processes are not developed enough to ensure that they really do contribute to ongoing improvements.

## 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>

Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	113649
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC038387
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	449454

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	99
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	12
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Annabel Didymus
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brett Storry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 February–1 March 2012
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