

# Tor Bridge High

Miller Way, Estover, Plymouth, PL6 8UN

**Inspection dates** 29–30 April 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The Principal and other senior leaders focus effectively on improving the quality of teaching for all students. They are committed to ensuring that students make the best possible progress in all aspects of their development.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations and make their lessons interesting for students.
- The proportion of students who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is rising and is now equal to the national average.
- From their starting points, students make good progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects. Their achievement is good.
- The sixth form is good. Students are able to study a very wide range of courses and they make good progress from their starting points.
- Students' behaviour is good. Students are considerate and respectful. They show positive attitudes to their learning.
- The school provides strong personal support for students. This helps them all to feel safe and improves their progress.
- Governors offer appropriate challenge and support for senior leaders. They check regularly the impact of actions taken by the school to improve teaching and achievement.

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

- The questions teachers ask do not always check thoroughly that students understand the new things that they learn.
- In a small minority of lessons work is too easy or too difficult for students, which means they do not make the best possible progress.
- Written work in subjects other than English is sometimes careless or inaccurate. It is not corrected consistently for spelling and grammar.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning in 36 lessons of which 32 were made jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also observed an assembly and visited several tutor groups.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and carried out two detailed scrutinies of their written work in several subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with three groups of students to hear their views on learning and behaviour in the school. They also spoke informally with students during their breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the Principal and several other staff with leadership responsibilities. The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to consider their impact on the school's achievements.
- Inspectors examined a variety of school documents. These included records of current students' progress, self-evaluation reports, improvement plans, along with behaviour and attendance logs. Inspectors also examined a sample of minutes of meetings of the governing body and other records relating to safeguarding and the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of questionnaires completed by 69 members of staff, 61 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and three letters from parents or carers.

## Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Atkinson	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Kevin Wright	Additional Inspector
Deborah Wring	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Tor Bridge High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school became an academy in August 2011 but has maintained a relationship with the local authority.
- The school shares a large site with a primary school, a special school and a nursery and children's centre.
- Almost all students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is above average. These students are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The school is divided into four smaller schools and each is led by a senior leader.
- The school has a support base for 10 students of ages 11 to 16 who need specialist teaching in speech and language.
- The proportion of students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding is above average. This funding is for students who did not reach the expected standards in reading or mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Some sixth form courses are organised in partnership with Lipson The Co-operative Academy and Sir John Hunt Community Sports College. Almost half of sixth form students follow work-related courses at training providers arranged by the Plymouth Learning Trust.
- A very small number of students attend alternative provision through Plymouth's Alternative Complementary Education Service.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise students' achievement by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
  - use questioning skilfully to check that students understand their new learning thoroughly
  - set work that is sufficiently challenging to enable students of all abilities to make the best possible progress
  - provide opportunities for students to develop the quality of their written work across the curriculum.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The Principal and all other school leaders are determined to ensure that students achieve well and improve their chances of success later in life. Governors and staff share this ambition, which is driving progress forward in the school.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because the improvements put in place since the previous inspection have not had full impact. Teaching and achievement are not yet outstanding.
- The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This accurate self-evaluation leads to clear improvement plans which focus on improving teaching and raising the achievement of all groups of students. For example, following the fall in GCSE results in 2014, school leaders took immediate action to improve standards and these actions have been effective.
- Robust arrangements are in place to check the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement. A well-planned coaching and support programme has been developed to improve teaching practice, and since the previous inspection this varied programme has been successful in removing weaker teaching.
- The school's systems for managing staff performance are rigorous and contribute well to improvements in teaching. Teachers are held accountable for the progress of students in their classes and the standards they achieve.
- Leaders have ensured that all students are known well and can be supported fully when this is needed. Heads of school ensure that students' behaviour is managed well and the schools' progress managers maintain very close contact with parents and carers.
- Middle leaders make a good contribution to school improvement and use data effectively to track students' progress. They provide a wide range of support to staff and students that is leading to rising achievement. The leadership of the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is excellent and ensures that these students, regardless of their individual needs, are full members of the school community and make good progress.
- The school has an increased focus on improving the achievement of disadvantaged students and strategies that have been introduced in Key Stage 3 are having a strong impact on improving these students' progress. The additional funding is well used to provide additional small teaching groups in English and mathematics and to provide students with one-to-one support.
- The range of subjects in the curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of all students. Time allocations for subjects have been reviewed and more time has been allocated to English and mathematics to raise standards in these subjects and respond to the increased demands of the new National Curriculum. In Key Stage 4, a wide range of GCSE courses is available and this provision is extended by a range of high-quality work-related courses. Students have many opportunities to extend their learning by taking part in sports, music and drama, both within and outside the school day.
- Impartial careers advice is provided for students from Year 8 to Year 13. This ensures that all students can make well-informed choices about their futures. As a result, very few students are not in employment, education or training when they leave the school.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Students are encouraged to support members of the local community and to take responsibility in the school. There are many opportunities for students to reflect on moral issues, such as the Holocaust, and to learn about the major faiths and cultures of the world. The British values of free speech and democracy are actively promoted. For example, during the inspection an inspiring assembly explained the basis of Britain's democracy and stressed the importance of young people voting in elections. The school's work ensures that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The Principal and the governing body ensure that the school rejects all forms of discrimination, fosters good relationships and promotes equality of opportunity for all its students. The school itself is a harmonious community where staff and students cooperate well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are well organised and effective. Six senior leaders are all trained to a high level in keeping students safe and form the school's safeguarding team. This ensures that students and parents and carers can always receive prompt advice if they have any safeguarding concerns. The school's arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
- The quality of all off-site provision is checked systematically by senior leaders to ensure that these students' progress, attendance and behaviour are good.
- The local authority is effective in supporting the school's improvements. The school improvement consultant visits the school regularly, monitors students' progress and advises on strategies to improve

teaching and raise achievement.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection governors have carried out an audit of their skills to improve their impact. New governors have been appointed with skills in business and finance.
- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support and play a full part in improving the school. They visit lessons and hold meetings with subject leaders to ensure that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- All governors take part in appropriate training to develop their skills and knowledge. This has included training in analysing the school's own information on students' progress as well as published figures. This ensures they have a good understanding of how the school compares to others nationally.
- Governors ensure that the school's finances are managed well and they have clear plans for the future. They check closely the use of additional funding, such as the pupil premium, and show a good knowledge of its impact.
- Governors now play a full part in the management of teachers' performance. With the Principal, they make sure that pay increases are awarded only to teachers who are effective in raising students' achievement. Governors have supported the Principal in tackling underperformance and in making strong staff appointments.
- Minutes of meetings show that governors are ambitious for the school and use their positions in the local community to enhance its reputation.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students are considerate, respectful and courteous to each other and to all members of staff. They are proud of their school. There is no graffiti and very little litter.
- Students move around the large school site calmly and are punctual to their lessons. During break and lunchtime, students mix well with each other and create a pleasant cooperative atmosphere.
- In almost all lessons students cooperate well. They respond promptly to the high expectations of their teachers and show that they want to learn. Occasionally, when teaching is not engaging they can lose interest.
- Students understand and support the school's systems for managing their behaviour. Students spoken with during the inspection appreciated the school's good balance between rewards and sanctions.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and is now average. The school has set ambitious targets to improve attendance further and works closely with the families of students whose attendance is not good.
- The rate of exclusions has decreased and is broadly average. The decrease is because the school has extended the range of its effective sanctions that improve students' behaviour.
- Students who receive specialist support in the school behave extremely well and this supports the good progress that they make.
- The behaviour and attendance of students who attend any off-site provision are checked regularly to ensure that they are good and that there are no concerns about their welfare or safety.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students spoken with during the inspection said that they feel safe in all parts of the school. They value the system of having four smaller schools within the whole school since this means that staff know them really well and can support them promptly if they have any problems.
- Students report that there are very few instances of bullying and any that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively. This is supported by the evidence seen in the school's behaviour logs.
- Students show a good understanding of e-safety and how to avoid unsafe websites. The school's own website contains useful information for parents and carers on how to keep their children safe when using computers.
- All staff receive regular, up-to-date training on safeguarding and are well aware of the correct procedures to follow if they have any concerns.
- The system of vertical tutor groups is popular with students. Younger students value the advice and

support of older students and feel that this helps them to feel safe and secure.

- Almost all parents and carers who responded to Parent View agreed that their children were happy and safe in school and that the school manages students' behaviour well.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Senior and middle leaders check the quality of teaching rigorously and respond to any weak teaching effectively. As a result, teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subjects they teach. Teachers have high expectations of their students and almost all students respond well to the challenges set.
- Teaching in both English and mathematics is good because it responds well to the needs of all groups of students. This is contributing to an increase in the rate at which standards are rising. The teaching of mathematics has been strengthened through changes in staffing and training.
- In most lessons teachers use assessment information well to plan learning activities. In a few lessons, however, work is not always set at the appropriate level of challenge for all groups of students. In these lessons the work can be too easy or too difficult for some members of the class so that they do not then make as much progress as they could.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not always check students' understanding sufficiently. Where this is the case, questioning is either too rushed or not demanding enough, so that students do not develop a thorough understanding of their new learning.
- Students who attend the school's support base for speech and language benefit from high-quality teaching which is tailored closely to their individual needs. This enables them to make good progress.
- There are good examples of written feedback in students' books and evidence that students respond to their teachers' comments. This leads to clear gains in their learning.
- Teachers build good relationships with students so that students listen to and respond promptly to teachers and collaborate well with each other.
- The teaching of reading is good and is a shared priority in all subjects. All students in Years 7 and 8 spend time each day following a structured reading programme and this is leading to good improvement in reading skills. Consistent practice in writing is less well developed. In some students' books written work is careless or inaccurate and this is not corrected for presentation, spelling or grammar.

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is below that expected for their age. Attainment at GCSE is broadly average. The school's detailed information on the progress of current Year 11 students indicates that their attainment will be at least equal to the most recent national average. In particular, these projections show a rapid increase in the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics.
- The progress measures of most groups of students in most subjects in recent years have been good overall. The school's records also show that the proportions of Year 11 students making the expected progress in English and mathematics have risen to at least the national average. The local authority, which monitors the school's progress, confirms that the school's assessments are thorough and accurate.
- The progress of students who left Year 11 in 2014 was not as strong as in previous years. The reasons for this dip have been identified and quickly addressed so that both attainment and progress have improved sharply. Detailed information presented by the school provided firm evidence to show that all groups of students are now making good progress across all year groups.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs progress well because teachers adapt their approaches to ensure that the needs of these students are met.
- The students who attend the school's specialist base make rapid progress from their starting points in their speech and language because of the exceptionally well-planned support they receive.
- The progress made by the most-able students is increasing and school data indicate that the achievement of those currently on the school roll is above average. The school has put strategies in place to increase the proportion of students gaining grades A and A\* at GCSE. The 'Aspire' programme supports the most able students throughout the school, encouraging them to be ambitious and providing extra academic challenges.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged students in English was about two thirds of a grade below that of other students in the school and one grade below that of other students nationally. In mathematics, the

attainment of these students was two thirds of a grade below that of other students in the school but about one and a half grades below that of other students nationally. Initiatives that have been introduced in the school are now showing increased impact for current students so that they are making more rapid progress and the attainment gaps are reducing. Disadvantaged students are now making progress equal to that of other students nationally.

- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used extremely well and, in particular, these students make rapid progress in their reading. This is as a result of well-targeted and effective strategies and enables these students to make good progress in all their subjects.
- The school no longer enters any student early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics.
- The small number of students who attend alternative provision make good progress, including in English and mathematics, so that they are able to apply their skills to real-life situations.

### The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders are focused on achievement and use data rigorously to monitor students' progress. They provide extra support when any students start to fall behind with their work. Several improvements have been made since the previous inspection. These include introducing more demanding entry requirements to ensure that students follow only appropriate courses in which they can succeed.
- By working with other colleges, the school provides an extremely wide range of both academic and work-related level 3 courses. This ensures that students are able to follow combinations of subjects that interest them and match their needs. The foundation diploma in art and design is particularly successful and enables many students to progress to full degree courses.
- Almost 100 students follow pre-apprenticeship courses with training providers, organised through the Plymouth Learning Trust. Success rates in these courses are well above average.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and high expectations so that students are challenged to work hard and reach their potential.
- Students' achievement is good because students make good progress from their different starting points in almost all subjects. Progress at A level and in other level 3 courses has improved to above average. Historically, progress in Year 12 was slower than in Year 13 but this has now been addressed so that standards at the end of Year 12 are in line with national expectations.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is consistently good and often better. Sixth form students act as excellent role models for younger students in the school, showing commitment to their studies and a strong desire to succeed. Many make contributions to the community, including volunteering in a local hospital and a nearby primary school.
- Students who enter the sixth form without a GCSE grade C in English or mathematics are supported and taught well in these subjects, whether on the school site or elsewhere. Consequently, their success rates are increasing and are now above average.
- Good careers advice is provided for all sixth form students and this is reflected in the increasing numbers gaining university places or employment or undertaking training.
- Students spoken with during the inspection reported that the school ensures that they are always safe in school and that their safety is checked closely if they are studying at another school site or training provider.
- Leadership and management of the sixth form are not outstanding because initiatives that have been introduced have not shown full impact. Teaching and achievement are improving but are not yet outstanding.

## 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>	137206
<b>Local authority</b>	Plymouth
<b>Inspection number</b>	462473

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>	Academy converter
<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>	1182
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	217
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sharon Cox
<b>Principal</b>	Liz Dunstan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2–3 July 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 207907
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