

# School for Inspiring Talents

The Growing Rooms, Seale Hayne, Howton Lane, Newton Abbott, Devon TQ12 6NG

## Inspection dates

12–14 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders do not monitor the progress of pupils closely enough. New systems to check pupils' progress have not yet had time to have an impact.
- Assessment is not used well enough to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning. As a result, these gaps are not being closed quickly enough.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour is gradually improving but it is not yet good.
- Checks to ensure that leaders bring about improvements at a rapid pace are not sufficiently effective.
- The school has not complied with the requirement to ensure that its handling of complaints meets the independent school standards.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school has established a strong team of staff who have high expectations of the personal and social development of pupils.
- A suitable range of subjects is taught and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- There is a good focus on improving pupils' literacy skills and many pupils have improved their reading ages.
- Pupils are making at least expected progress in the current school year.
- Pupils like school and many have improved their attendance from their previous settings.
- The use of therapists and specialist staff is supporting pupils well in learning how to manage their social and emotional needs.
- Pupils and parents have positive views of the school and consider that it is helping to improve behaviour at home and in school.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - using assessment to accurately identify gaps in pupils' learning and ensure that these gaps are closed quickly
  - enabling pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - checking more closely the progress of pupils to identify the actions needed to raise achievement
  - ensuring that those responsible for governance make sure that improvements are made at a good pace.

### The school must meet the following independent school standards:

- The proprietor must ensure that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 33(g)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Since the school opened, school leaders had taken action to ensure that the independent school standards were met. At present, those responsible for governance are the director and the Principal. This is a recent change. Following the change, the school had not reviewed its policy for complaints procedures to ensure that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school. By the time the inspection was completed, the school had resolved this policy issue.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are clear about what needs to be done to develop the school. However, there are not strong enough checks in place to ensure that swift actions are taken to bring about improvement. This makes it difficult for those responsible for governance to hold the school to account to ensure that it is improving fast enough.
- Leaders have successfully established an environment that is having a positive impact in supporting pupils' personal and social needs. As a result, pupils like school and are showing an interest in learning. One pupil commented that this is the first time they have felt their needs are understood.
- Over the last year, the school has used performance management processes well to develop staff skills and ensure that it has a team of staff who are knowledgeable and effective. As a result, there is stronger evidence, since the start of the academic year, that pupils are making better progress in their learning.
- Middle leaders are taking an active role in curriculum planning and are benefiting from a range of training opportunities. Recent appointments are already having an impact in supporting less experienced teachers in improving their lesson planning.
- There is good practice in sharing effective practice and time is provided for less experienced staff to observe and learn from the more established teachers. This is beginning to ensure that the good practice that exists within the staff team is developed at all levels.
- The curriculum is developing well towards providing good learning opportunities for pupils. Senior leaders have ensured that there is a strong focus on improving pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils have the opportunity to learn about a range of different subjects and their creativity is promoted effectively. Physical education plays an important part in the school's timetable, providing pupils with the opportunity to learn teamwork as well as to improve their skills. All pupils, together with staff, regularly practise activities to develop pupils' concentration skills.
- Topic work ensures that there is a good range of experiences that enable pupils to gain a better understanding of life in a multicultural society and of British values. As a result, they are being prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils talk positively about the opportunities they have to learn practical skills. They have completed a project about life in Africa and presented their findings, together with a range of different African foods they had made, to parents and staff. Their topic this term is 'rights and responsibilities' and they have discussed, for example, the difference between what they 'want' and what they 'need'.
- The school accesses impartial careers guidance and this is used well to support pupils as they start thinking about the courses they will take in Years 10 and 11 and their plans for the future.
- The funding for the very small number of disadvantaged pupils is used appropriately to support their literacy skills and provide access to therapeutic support.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The school is very aware of the small number of girls compared with boys and staff work hard to ensure their needs are met. There are very strong relationships between staff and pupils and any discrimination is tackled quickly. A good level of training ensures that staff understand how to raise pupils' awareness of extremism. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils are kept safe in school and there are clear rules and expectations that are understood by pupils and staff. Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of child protection and safeguarding and take their responsibilities in this area seriously. There are regular fire drills and checks on fire-safety equipment.

- There is regular information to parents and the school's website, overall, provides parents and other interested parties with a clear overview of the school. Reports to parents are detailed about improvements in behaviour. Parents have expressed a wish for more information about what their children are learning and the school is in the process of improving its reports to take this into account.
  - The appointment of a family social worker is already having a positive impact in supporting parents and their children; this is evident in the improvement in attendance for some young people.
- **The governance of the school**
- Those responsible for governance have a good knowledge and understanding of the special educational needs of the pupils and have been effective in putting in a range of strategies that support the young people's social, emotional and mental health needs. This is reflected in the investment in appropriate therapeutic staff and the strong links with educational and clinical psychologists.
  - The school is developing systems to check the progress of pupils. These processes are still new, and leaders and those responsible for governance are beginning to develop an understanding of the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress.
  - The school has made a strong commitment to the present intake of pupils and has decided, with the agreement of the commissioning local authority, not to take pupils above Year 9. This will enable the school to 'grow its own', so that as pupils move into Years 10 and 11, they will provide positive role models for the younger pupils who start at the school.
  - The accommodation is adequate in meeting the learning needs of the present number of pupils on roll. The school is registered to take up to 24 pupils. However, in discussion with governors, it has been agreed with the lead inspector that it should not take more than 15 pupils in the present accommodation. The Department for Education will be notified of this recommendation.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work closely with the placing local authority to ensure that pupils are protected. Good use is made of the local authority's training programmes to ensure that staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding procedures and understand how to keep pupils safe.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- The new staff team works well together; its members are enthusiastic and keen to do the best for the pupils.
- While there is a framework for assessing pupils' ability when they start school, assessments are not being undertaken quickly enough to identify gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, teachers do not have a clear understanding of what pupils can do and this limits their effectiveness in ensuring pupils make at least good progress. On occasions, such as in literacy, the most able are suitably challenged by the tasks set.
- There is strong subject knowledge among the staff team, particularly in literacy, and this is used well to support planning and ensure pupils' skills, for example in phonics, are promoted well.
- Staff are skilled in working with pupils with challenging behaviours and build very positive relationships that support and encourage pupils to stay on task.
- In lessons and in pupils' work, it is clear that pupils enjoy many of the tasks they are set; they are proud of their achievements and several were keen to show off the work they had done.
- Staff make lessons as practical as possible and this holds pupils' interests well. Recently developed systems for recording what pupils know and understand during the lesson are now in place, particularly where there is no written task. These are very detailed commentaries and provide helpful information to teachers. However, there is not always information provided to pupils to let them know how well they have done during the lesson and what they need to do to improve.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- Pupils' personal development and welfare require improvement.
- Several of the pupils have only recently started at the school. They are adapting to a new approach which, for many, is very different from the one they have experienced in the past. Typically, pupils join having experienced a number of setbacks in their previous settings and some have been out of school for some time. For many, their social and emotional skills have not been supported well enough in the past for them to overcome the barriers to their learning.
- It is evident that pupils are gradually developing in self-confidence. They know they can talk to staff and are gradually gaining in confidence to make decisions, such as when to remove themselves from a situation when they are getting distressed. More importantly, they are building up confidence in adults and are beginning to trust those around them because they feel safe.
- Pupils show pride in their work and talk positively about their achievements and how well they are doing as they gain points for hard work and good behaviour throughout the day.
- Playtime, when pupils play games with staff and each other, and breakfast time when they sit and talk to staff, are invariably positive and pleasant occasions. This is a good indication of the progress many pupils have made in their personal and social skills.
- Some pupils are still testing the barriers because of their low self-esteem and lack of trust and do not always make the right choices in keeping themselves safe. As a result, at times, they react negatively to staff interventions. It is a credit to many of the other pupils who ignore the behaviour of others and continue with their work.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that where there is bullying, staff deal with this quickly. Staff take rapid action and tackle any discriminatory and derogatory language.
- Staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour and, through the positive relationships with pupils, encourage them to think about right and wrong. Systems are in place to reward good behaviour and pupils talk positively about these.
- Pupils have a history of challenging behaviour and negative attitudes, but gradually they are engaging in lessons and reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour. The number of short-term exclusions has remained similar since the school opened, as has the number of physical interventions. Whilst not excessive, the school is keen to reduce these further.
- Many pupils have had a poor history of attendance. However, nearly all pupils have improved their attendance. There are good systems to support them, particularly in the work being done with families by the education welfare officer.

## Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Evidence from pupils' work and observations of lessons indicate that pupils are developing a range of skills in the subjects they study. However, not enough pupils make good progress because they are not always given work that stretches them and assessment is not used consistently to identify gaps in their learning.
- Progress last year was affected by the variable quality of teaching. This has been resolved by senior leaders and there are now high expectations for what pupils can learn.
- There is clear evidence that pupils' reading ages are improving, some quite dramatically. Many pupils start with low levels of literacy; a few are non-readers, and they are gaining an understanding of the use of phonics and showing enjoyment in reading and listening to stories.
- Work in books indicates that many pupils have gained confidence in writing and have gone from very limited written work to writing in more detail and producing stories based on the books they have read. One pupil was very proud of his letter explaining to the owner of a set of crayons why, as a crayon, he was refusing to work because he was not being used enough.

- In mathematics, pupils are gaining skills in number, space and shape. The work in geography and design and technology has captivated the interest of many of the younger pupils. Some have taken sewing home to work on and one parent commented how pleased she was about the skills her son had gained.
- The school is very aware that many pupils have large gaps in their knowledge and that this varies from pupil to pupil. However, the school's limited assessment processes when pupils start have not always ensured that these gaps are identified quickly enough. Consequently, there is more to do to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress.
- Very few pupils receive pupil premium funding. The school uses this funding well to help these pupils make up lost ground in their literacy and numeracy skills to enable them to make the progress they should.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141515
<b>Inspection number</b>	10006312
<b>DfE registration number</b>	878/6064

This inspection was carried out under section 109 (1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	School for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	12
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mark Escott
<b>Chair</b>	Judith Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Escott
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 325625
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sfit.org.uk">www.sfit.org.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@sfit.org.uk">admin@sfit.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Chief Executive Officer is the Principal and also acts as the proprietor.
- School for Inspiring Talents leases rooms from the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust and is based in Seale Hayne in a rural area on the outskirts of Newton Abbott. It is owned by Life Chance Education Limited (LCE).
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan and are placed at the school by local authorities. Most pupils have been excluded or withdrawn from their previous education.
- The school's goal for pupils is that they 'be the best they can'.
- The school opened in October 2014. This is its first inspection.
- The school does not at present use any alternative providers.
- The school provides a breakfast club each morning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five parts of lessons, four of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Pupils' work, annual reports and other records were scrutinised.
- The inspector held discussions with the two directors as well as the Principal and staff, and spoke with pupils.
- The inspector spoke with one parent on the phone and with a representative of the placing local authority.
- Two staff responses to a questionnaire were analysed.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, to register a response.
- A number of school policies and documents were examined to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

## Inspection team

Sarah J Mascal, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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