

# Torquay Academy

Cricketfield Road, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7NU

## Inspection dates

14–15 June 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils, staff and governors take pride in being part of Torquay Academy. Pupils view the school as a 'real community'.
- Inspired by the leadership of the principal, senior leaders have brought about rapid improvements to pupils' behaviour, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body provides a good level of support and challenge. Governors have an accurate understanding of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and leadership. Governors are ambitious for the school to improve further.
- Pupils' achievement is now good and on track to improve further. Pupils make rapid progress in English and mathematics.
- Achievement is strong in creative arts. Pupils show great confidence and skill when performing and expressing themselves using visual art.
- Leaders and governors ensure that pupils are safe. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average.
- Improvements in behaviour have resulted in an orderly culture where pupils are ready to learn and willing to participate in the everyday life of the school.
- There is a strong, caring ethos in the school. Pupils, parents and carers value the support provided by staff to help pupils succeed. Staff are persistent in supporting pupils to overcome any difficulties they may experience.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils at the school.
- Sixth-form students are role models for other pupils and make a significantly positive contribution to school life.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders have not driven improvements in the sixth form as rapidly as in the rest of the school. Students on academic courses do not consistently achieve as highly as those on vocational programmes.
- The most able pupils do not consistently make the progress they are capable of when they are insufficiently challenged.
- Information about pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not consistently used by teachers across the curriculum to inform their planning.
- Pupils are not as sure about how to keep safe from the dangers of radicalisation or extremism as they are about other aspects of personal safety.

## Full report

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

- Continue to improve outcomes by:
  - providing regular opportunities for the most able pupils to deepen their understanding by applying their skills and knowledge in enquiry, investigation and problem-solving
  - effectively and consistently using information about pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to plan learning across the whole curriculum.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
- Improve the quality of leadership in the sixth form so that:
  - the sixth form is as rigorously monitored as the rest of the school
  - students achieve well on all academic courses.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Dynamic leadership from the academy principal creates a calm, orderly, caring and ambitious place to work and learn. His clear and strong strategy for transforming the school through a focus on pupils' behaviour has produced a safe learning community. As a consequence, teachers, parents and pupils overwhelmingly support what is being achieved through his leadership.
- School leaders have recruited and developed teaching staff well. A well-organised and effective training programme, closely aligned to staff performance, is improving the quality of teaching and leadership across the school. Staff welcome the training opportunities that include visits to observe practice, 'action coaching' and a focus on evidence-based research. Consequently, staff are taking a lead on improving their own practice.
- Senior leaders have been successful in raising the quality of assessment. They have developed a consistent approach to using assessment information on pupils' performance to hold subject leaders and teachers to account for the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils know how well they are doing and what it is they need to improve further. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress.
- Strong middle leadership in some subjects is producing consistently high levels of achievement. This is the case in English, mathematics, creative arts and, more recently, in science. In these subjects, good leadership is helping to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. However, where subject leadership has been less strong, improvements in pupils' rates of progress have been slower.
- Leaders have rightly identified that the challenge and achievement for the most able pupils is not always effective. Recent action to strengthen provision for the most able pupils and increase levels of challenge across the curriculum is too recent to have made an impact on pupils' learning at this time.
- The process of identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been improved and this has resulted in a stronger focus on a smaller number of students. As yet, however, the special educational needs coordinator has not had sufficient influence on teaching across the full range of subjects. Consequently, some identified pupils do not make consistently good progress across the curriculum.
- The day-to-day running of the sixth form has been managed well during a period of staffing difficulties, but these have slowed plans for strategic improvement of sixth-form provision.
- School leaders have modified the curriculum in recent years to ensure that pupils are able to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy well across all subjects.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and Year 7 catch-up is used well to provide extra support. This has resulted in good progress for these pupils.
- The opportunities for pupils to learn about different cultures and modern British values are woven within a well-planned curriculum. Pupils have opportunities to consider events that affect them, for example to debate whether to remain in the European Union or to leave. As a result of this curriculum, pupils develop a strong sense of what is right and wrong, leading to a clear culture of good behaviour.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The school is part of the Torquay Boys' Grammar School Multi Academy Trust, which has responsibility for governance.
  - The local governing body is very supportive of the changes brought about by senior leaders and appreciative of the improved learning culture that has developed since the previous inspection.
  - Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas that need improving. This enables them to provide school leaders with effective challenge and support.
  - Governors monitor well how additional pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent and the impact this has on raising pupils' achievement.
  - Governors fulfil all of their statutory duties well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated lead is unrelenting in ensuring pupils in need or at risk get the right intervention, care, support or guidance. Staff work effectively with external agencies in the best interests of pupils. Records and case information are meticulously kept and monitored. Teachers and governors are trained and updated in how to respond to safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding governor effectively monitors safeguarding records and the quality of record-keeping. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, such as when using mobile social networks. In the main school,

although teachers have recently been trained in line with the government's 'Prevent' duty, pupils are not confident in their knowledge of how to keep safe from the dangers of radicalisation or extremism.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers plan carefully to build on prior learning. Most pupils are challenged well by effective use of questioning to extend their learning, with teachers quickly unravelling any misunderstanding.
- Teachers focus on 'getting the basics right' so that pupils can be successful in examinations. For example, in history, Year 10 pupils gained a clear understanding of how to construct a balanced answer using 'on one hand, on the other hand', which they then successfully applied in answering an examination question.
- Pupils enjoy learning and make good progress in subjects where teaching is varied and lively and teachers know how to get the best from each pupil. This is often the case in English and the creative arts. Pupils confidently produce many examples of high-quality, gallery-ready art.
- High-quality teaching in English and mathematics has resulted in pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieving well. Teachers plan effectively because they know each pupil's learning needs.
- Most teachers adapt work appropriately for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, this does not happen consistently across the curriculum.
- The newly established cycle of assessment is having a positive impact upon improving learning and is understood by pupils. As a result, pupils are clear on what to do and how to improve their work further.
- Overall, there is too little opportunity for pupils to develop reasoning skills in a range of subjects. Pupils are not consistently challenged to enquire, investigate and solve problems. This is limiting the progress of some pupils, particularly the most able pupils and students on post-16 study programmes.
- Parents are unsure that homework is effectively used. There was little evidence in pupils' books of the regular setting of appropriate and effective homework.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Parents are confident in how safe and happy their children are at the school. Parents contacted the inspection team to express their gratitude for the way staff cared for their children during the school day and for leaders' relentless pursuit to get the right external support.
- Pupils report little bullying. When incidents occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Instances of pupils using derogatory language are rare. When they do happen, they are dealt with in a firm, careful and considered way.
- School leaders give high priority to pupils' welfare. Pupils feel safe in the school and know which staff to approach if they have any concerns. They have regular opportunities to consider how to keep themselves safe, including when using mobile phones for social networking.
- Pupils take pride in their work and treat their individual, subject-specific exercise books well. They ensure that work is well presented.
- Five pupils attend off-site provision provided by the local authority. The school receives regular reports on the pupils' progress and ensures that the pupils are safe.
- Careers advice and guidance are effective. Pupils have access to a good range of information and make appropriate choices.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Senior leaders have placed great emphasis on improving pupils' behaviour since the previous inspection. The successful strategy has meant that pupils start the day entering the building in a calm manner. They conduct themselves around the buildings politely, showing respect towards others. Pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn. This good behaviour demonstrates pupils' pride in being part of a caring community.
- The transformation of pupils' behaviour throughout the school is also improving pupils' attitudes to learning. However, pupils are not, as yet, routinely using good learning habits. This is because not all teachers consistently model how pupils should ask questions or how they can connect previous knowledge

to new learning. Consequently, they do not always move on to new learning quickly enough.

- Although a higher proportion of pupils have been excluded than found nationally, the proportion is reducing. Pupils with repeated exclusions are provided with plans devised by the school, in conjunction with external partners, so that these pupils do not fall behind in their learning.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It is now broadly in line with the national average. School leaders are relentless in supporting those pupils that are frequently absent or late to attend well and be on time.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved significantly across all year groups over the last two years and they are now making rapid progress in most subjects. This is especially the case in key stage 4 where pupils' work in their books and current pupils' performance data indicate that rates of progress are continuing to improve, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics was significantly higher than in 2014, although still below the national average. The school's assessment information suggests that there will be further improvements in 2016.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 11 pupils who made at least the expected progress in English and mathematics was well above their peers nationally. The proportion of pupils exceeding the expected progress in English was also higher than nationally.
- Many pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points across the majority of the curriculum as a result of the effective support they receive. However, this good progress does not extend across the whole curriculum.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. In 2015, Year 11 disadvantaged pupils made better progress in English than their peers both in school and nationally.
- The most able pupils make slower progress than their peers as they are not always sufficiently challenged to think more deeply about their learning.
- Historically, there have been wide variations in the performance of pupils in different subjects. In 2015, the progress in science and languages was weak. For current pupils, there is now less variation as a result of better teaching. The progress in geography has not been as rapid as in other areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils' past underachievement has meant that they have not been well prepared for the next stage in their education. As outcomes have improved, however, so have the opportunities to achieve qualifications that open up a wider range of options. This is particularly the case in the improved basic skills of sixth-form students on entry and in their raised aspirations.

## 16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- Most students make rapid progress on vocational courses, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The strengths in these courses reflect those of the school as a whole: well organised teaching, good use of assessment, clear deadlines and high expectations. The vocational provision includes some innovative courses which are popular with students, such as the football academy, and have been introduced to meet local demand.
- From the small number of students starting in 2013, the sixth form has grown in popularity with students and is now serving their needs well. The school offers a good range of vocational and academic courses, with most students taking vocational or a combination of academic and vocational courses.
- Overall, a small number of students on academic routes do not make the same consistently good progress as their peers on vocational courses. In academic subjects, such as mathematics and business studies, too many students have not been successful in the past. School leaders now give improved advice and guidance to students who express an interest in these academic subjects.
- Leaders effectively plan 16 to 19 study programmes to meet individual needs. This includes opportunities to follow purposeful work experience.
- In the absence of a leader of sixth form since December 2015, the drive for improvement has lacked the same impetus as in other parts of the school. The detailed understanding of students' performance and ways to improve that have been established in the rest of the school are missing in the sixth form. Nevertheless, improvement in the ethos and learning culture in the rest of the school has also had a similar

impact in the sixth form.

- Students are generally very positive about their experiences and value the community feel and the support from teachers who 'know you and who care'. Students praise the way staff respond to help those who are finding particular topics or subjects difficult.
- Students make a valuable contribution to the rest of the school by providing support in main school classes and acting as mentors for younger pupils. They have been briefed well about their safeguarding responsibilities in undertaking these roles. The 'student leadership group' is a valuable forum through which sixth-form students can influence school developments and contribute in other ways such as charitable events. Students in the sixth form set the tone as positive role models for the rest of the school.
- Overall, the information, advice and guidance given to students on entry to the sixth form are now effective. As a result of strict application of entry requirements and a good balance of courses, students are more likely to stay on and succeed in the courses they have selected.
- Some Year 13 students are hampered by weaknesses in basic skills, particularly weak literacy, which affect their progress and attainment. Not all teachers are aware of this and do not adapt their teaching to meet students' needs well enough.
- The majority of those students resitting GCSE English or mathematics have improved their grade, but not sufficiently to secure the C grade or above that they need.
- Students have a sound understanding of safety and how to keep themselves safe, including, for example, drug and alcohol awareness and safe relationships. Opportunities are given to consider issues that affect peoples' lives in Britain today, such as diversity, racism and equality.
- Students indicate that the information, advice and guidance they receive to consider future options are strong. They have a one-to-one adviser available, feel well informed and know who to ask or where to go to find out more information. In 2015, all students progressed to education, training or employment.
- Most students make good use of private study time and like the fact that this is supervised by staff. This ensures students make productive use of independent study time. Many feel that they get good guidance and feedback about how well they are doing and like the opportunity to review their learning at the end of each assessment cycle.
- There is a strong and effective focus on good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is rising quickly in the sixth form and is similar to levels of attendance in the rest of the school.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138370
<b>Local authority</b>	Torbay
<b>Inspection number</b>	10012373

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,080
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	122
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The trust board
<b>Chair</b>	Vince Flower
<b>Principal</b>	Stephen Margetts
<b>Telephone number</b>	01803 329351
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tqacademy.co.uk">www.tqacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@tqacademy.co.uk">admin@tqacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4–5 June 2014

## Information about this school

- Torquay Academy is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form and serves the coastal town of Torquay and surrounding area.
- The school converted to become a sponsored academy in September 2012.
- The school is part of the Torquay Boys' Grammar School Multi Academy Trust.
- The school opened a sixth form in 2013 in partnership across the trust.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals, those adopted from care and children looked after) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils identified who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion with a statement of educational needs or an education, health and care plan is average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2015, pupil performance met the floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 4.
- At the time of inspection, Year 11 pupils and Year 13 students were undertaking public examinations.
- On the recommendation of Torbay local authority, five pupils attend alternative provision which is not registered. This matter has been raised with the local authority. School leaders monitor the safeguarding procedures to check pupils are safe and they regularly check pupils' progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning through short visits to lessons, looking at pupils' work and 31 part lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups. Many of the lessons were observed jointly with leaders from the academy.
- They carried out an analysis of previous and current data and scrutinised a range of documents relating to school policies and procedures.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, teachers, middle and senior leaders, the academy principal and representatives from the local governing body and trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a sample of pupils' work.
- Seventy-five parents responded to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and some parents contacted the inspection team directly.
- Ninety-five staff completed the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Mark Jenner, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lee Northern	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	Ofsted Inspector



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