

# Mount Tamar School

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

## Inspection dates

13–14 July 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	<b>Good</b>
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision	<b>Good</b>
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders demonstrate an uncompromising drive to provide the very best education for their pupils. The school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection.
- Governors provide very strong support and challenge to leaders.
- Leaders have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and the steps they need to take to improve it further.
- Senior leaders provide high-quality coaching and mentoring to staff. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly and continues to do so.
- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the previous inspection. Most pupils make at least good progress from their starting points. Improving the progress of the most able pupils continues to be a focus for the school.
- Middle leaders support staff effectively to improve their teaching. Nonetheless, some inconsistency remains in the implementation of the school's agreed approaches to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.
- Leaders have transformed the quality of accommodation in the residential setting.
- The recent appointment of an independent visitor is supporting pupils' safety. However, the role is not yet sufficiently well developed to fully evaluate the quality of residential care.
- Staff build effective relationships with their pupils both in school and in the residential setting. Pupils' behaviour improves over time.
- While the school forges constructive relationships with many parents, there are others who are dissatisfied. School leaders have recognised the need for better working relationships in some cases.
- Leaders provide effective training to support staff in managing pupils' challenging behaviour. The number of physical restraints has fallen considerably this academic year.
- The curriculum supports pupils' self-esteem and aspirations. However, leaders are aware that some pupils need to develop greater independence and resilience.

### **Compliance with national minimum standards for residential special schools**

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further to enable pupils to achieve the strongest possible outcomes by ensuring that:
  - the approaches introduced by leaders are consistently implemented across the school
  - the most able pupils achieve their full potential
  - pupils develop the resilience and independence they need to become self-motivated learners
  - communication with parents and families is as strong as it can be.
- Develop the role of the independent visitor to ensure that the quality of care pupils receive in the residential setting is thoroughly evaluated.

## Inspection judgements

<b>Effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision</b>	<b>Good</b>

- Leaders, under the direction of the headteacher, have worked tirelessly to implement the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They demonstrate an absolute belief that pupils at Mount Tamar deserve the best education. Consequently, most pupils make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have built a strong staff team and instilled a culture in which pupils are expected to achieve. Staff have an unshakeable belief that every child can achieve in both their academic and personal development. The school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Staff typically state, 'I am really proud to work at Mount Tamar. The school is unrecognisable now from where it was four years ago.'
- Leaders keep a keen eye on the quality of teaching. They provide personalised feedback to teachers and hold them firmly to account for the progress of their pupils. Leaders have established a 'no excuses' culture and are hugely influential in driving improvement which is precisely targeted at the school's needs.
- Leaders have transformed the learning environment. High-quality displays, evident in every class, demonstrate the school's core purpose to focus relentlessly on learning. The tidy, bright and inviting environment helps pupils feel secure in their learning. Visual reminders to pupils to respect and care for each other are displayed around the school. Lessons are mostly calm and pupils understand the clear routines and teachers' expectations for high-quality work and behaviour.
- The head of care is a strong and dynamic leader. Her role within the school has developed significantly and she is a valued member of the senior leadership team. Her expertise has been successfully harnessed to improve behaviour significantly and reduce the number of serious incidents, physical restraints and exclusions. Pupils' potential to learn during their school day is therefore enhanced by their residential experience.
- The head of care and her team are very knowledgeable about the pupils in their care. They have insight into their family circumstances and understand their individual needs. They support pupils to make progress in different areas that help them in their lives at home as well as in school. In addition, they support families with coffee mornings and initiatives such as cookery courses.
- Leaders evaluate their own performance rigorously. As a result, they have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and accurately identify the next steps required to improve further. This highly effective approach has resulted in the school's rapid improvement.
- Middle leaders have taken an increasingly prominent role in improving the quality of teaching. Leaders demonstrate a deep understanding of standards in their subjects.

They know what needs to be done to improve teaching, learning and assessment further. However, agreed strategies to improve the quality of teaching are not always consistently implemented across the school.

- Leaders plan the curriculum meticulously to meet the needs of the learners at Mount Tamar. In particular, they have implemented new schemes of work for English and mathematics that raise standards and expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding in a range of subjects. These include music, information technology and photography. Leaders have also been proactive in setting up 'Aspire' learning centres to engage pupils with significant social, emotional and mental health needs. As a result, nearly all pupils achieve accreditation in English and mathematics and learn to self-manage their often very challenging and anxious behaviours.
- Leaders and governors ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those who are looked after achieve in line with their peers and, on occasion, outperform other pupils. They focus relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and learning for each pupil. Leaders plan and implement interventions using additional funding, with highly effective support from the well-trained staff and therapists.
- Additional sport funding extends the range of sporting opportunities and develops pupils' well-being, team work and self-esteem. During the inspection, pupils took part in a well-organised sports day. They worked together in teams and most demonstrated a willingness to participate in a wide range of sporting activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through all aspects of the school's work. Pupils learn to respect other pupils and their views. Recent visits, such as to the Houses of Parliament, together with the effective school parliament, support pupils in understanding the importance of living in a democratic society.
- The school receives effective external support from the local authority. The school is now viewed by the authority as being 'pivotal' to providing high-quality provision for some of the local area's most vulnerable pupils. School leaders have been proactive in sharing expertise with a nearby outstanding school and other providers as part of a reciprocal arrangement.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are strongly committed and determined to provide the very best education for the pupils of Mount Tamar. Their outstanding governance has been key to improving the school. They work closely with the headteacher and leaders to drive improvement.
- Governors ask pertinent and challenging questions to check for themselves that the school's actions are making a difference to pupils' learning and outcomes. They know where teaching is strong and where further development is required. They check robustly that pay awards are merited and oversee the management of teachers' performance. They ask insightful questions to satisfy themselves that teachers receive the support they need to continue to improve.
- Governors check on the impact of additional funding. They have supported leaders' work to set up the 'Aspire' centres to ensure that pupils with the most complex needs remain in education. The work of the governing body has contributed strongly to the

school's improvement. The capacity for ongoing improvement is strong.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders act decisively if concerns are raised relating to pupils' safety or the suitability of staff. They record all concerns assiduously and, where necessary, seek advice from external partners. This advice is acted on swiftly. All leaders and staff are uncompromising in their determination to keep pupils safe. Staff receive regular and ongoing training to enable them to identify and act on signs of harm or risk. This includes training on the school's 'Prevent' duty, and child sexual exploitation. In discussions, staff told inspectors that they are well supported by leaders and know what to do if they identify concerns.
- Governors ensure that staff are recruited safely. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks that the school's systems are being implemented effectively. This includes checking the accuracy of information recorded on the school's single central record.

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

**Good**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching. They have set out clear expectations for planning work which meets pupils' individual needs. They expect pupils to complete high-quality work in their books. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. Nevertheless, leaders acknowledge that approaches to improve the quality of teaching are not yet being implemented with sufficient consistency across the school.
- Staff build positive relationships with pupils. They set out their expectations clearly so that pupils understand their boundaries. Pupils learn that staff care for them. This care is evident in the way staff work closely with pupils and their families. Pupils are supported to settle, learn and make progress during their time at the school.
- On arrival, staff quickly assess pupils' academic, social and individual needs, against the school's own 'risk and resilience' criteria. Staff work with therapists to set aspirational targets and implement interventions to support pupils to achieve.
- Teachers place a high priority on teaching key skills in English and mathematics. Pupils learn to use their knowledge of initial sounds in the primary phase to read and write simple words. Staff encourage them to write simple sentences using punctuation. Older pupils produce good-quality extended writing based on their analysis of 'Romeo and Juliet'. In mathematics, the increased focus on developing pupils' problem-solving skills is supporting them to make good progress in this subject. Pupils build their skills and confidence over time so that most are well placed to achieve good outcomes in accredited examinations at an appropriate standard.
- Teachers set homework tasks to support pupils effectively with their work. In addition, the school provides parents with detailed information, recording their child's academic and personal development.
- Teachers ensure that the most able pupils are well prepared to take GCSEs in English and mathematics and in other subjects that interest them. Nonetheless, leaders

confirm that the most able pupils require further challenge to make the very best progress they are capable of.

- Teachers use probing questions to encourage pupils to think and to extend their learning. For example, pupils in the primary phase build on teachers' questioning to discuss and research the lives of children in Victorian times. Pupils' confidence increases as a result.
- Teaching assistants contribute significantly to pupils' academic and personal development. Nearly all are highly positive about the support and training leaders provide to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils have experienced failure in their previous school. With adult support, they settle and learn to manage their feelings of anxiety or negativity toward education. Consequently, most pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe in school and in the residential setting.
- Staff are skilled at helping pupils to be successful learners. However, some pupils would benefit from becoming more independent and resilient while being less reliant on adults. This would help to prepare them for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Staff place a very high priority on pupils' personal development and welfare to enable them to learn successfully. This is the case in the 'Aspire' centres where staff work with individual pupils with complex needs. Staff look for opportunities to celebrate pupils' achievements so that they feel proud. This builds their self-confidence, which often has been lost before joining the school.
- Leaders plan assemblies on a range of topics to teach pupils how to stay safe. This work complements the learning which takes place in personal, social and health education lessons. For example, pupils learn to stay safe online and understand different forms of bullying. Pupils also learn about different faiths in assemblies, such as Christianity and Islam, helping them to be tolerant and respectful young people.
- Leaders include pupils' views in the running of the school. The school parliament, led by the student Prime Minister, represents the school and meets the school's leadership team regularly to provide their views about the school's future direction. This develops a sense of belonging and pride in their school.
- The recently appointed independent visitor carries out regular visits to the residential setting. However, there is scope to further evaluate the quality of care pupils receive. For example, some children and young people are not able to personalise their bedrooms or have access to a lockable cupboard.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced rigorous systems and procedures to manage pupils' behaviour. Staff make their high expectations clear and reward pupils throughout the day to encourage good behaviour. The consistent expectations and clear boundaries have resulted in a significant fall in serious incidents, restraints or challenging behaviour this year.
- Pupils learn to manage their own behaviour. Staff act calmly and in line with the school's policy and procedures when incidents do occur. The school's records confirm that restraint is now used as a last resort. Staff keep detailed records of serious incidents and identify patterns of behaviour. The therapy team works closely with teaching staff to reduce pupils' anxieties and modify challenging behaviours. This approach is supporting pupils with the most complex needs to learn more effectively and manage their anxieties and behaviour.
- Pupils' behaviour in the residential provision is good. The head of care has established good after-school routines and pupils enjoy a range of stimulating activities. Leaders ensure that pupils are well supervised. Break and lunchtimes in the school are mostly calm and provide an opportunity for pupils to play together in a safe environment.
- The parent support adviser and the school's safeguarding team work closely with families to provide high-quality support. This work contributes effectively to pupils' success in school. Most parents value this work. However, a small number continue to state that communication between home and school is not effective.
- Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. It is rigorously monitored and recorded. Staff follow up absence immediately to ensure pupils' safety. The work in the 'Aspire' centres has contributed to improved attendance for pupils with complex mental health needs.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils arrive at Mount Tamar having had a negative experience of school. Their attainment on entry is significantly below that expected for their age. Some have missed large amounts of time in school and, consequently, have not developed positive attitudes to learning. Their self-confidence and self-esteem are particularly low. Despite this difficult start, most pupils make at least good progress from their starting points.
- Work in books across a range of subjects confirms that pupils build their knowledge, skills and understanding over time. Teachers plan small steps of learning, linked to age-related expectations. They build in personalised targets to improve pupils' self-confidence and to address gaps in what pupils know, can do and understand. Pupils' outcomes improve, enabling them to access external accreditation at an appropriate level. This includes GCSEs and entry-level qualifications.
- The pupils in the primary phase build on their early reading, writing and mathematics skills. They learn to write for different purposes and use punctuation with increasing accuracy.
- Teachers check pupils' progress each term. Information held by the school confirms that some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the achievement of a small number of pupils remain. This is particularly the case where pupils are learning to manage their behaviours and focus on their work. Some pupils take time to settle or experience periods where they are unsettled during the school year. However, leaders



are taking effective action to help these pupils make greater progress.

- The most able pupils achieve GCSEs in English and mathematics. Leaders have established links with local universities to raise aspirations and encourage pupils to enter higher education. However, some of the most able pupils do not achieve their full potential. Leaders have identified this as an area for further improvement.
- Children who are looked after make progress that is the same as, or even better than, that of their classmates. In addition, there are no discernible differences between the achievement and progress of the disadvantaged pupils and those of their peers.
- Pupils benefit from the personalised learning support provided at the 'Aspire' centres. Pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health difficulties work closely with teachers and support staff. As a result, pupils' attendance, engagement in learning and outcomes improve.
- Staff provide pupils with careers guidance and work experience opportunities. For example, pupils work on the school's off-site farm to gain skills in land management and agriculture. Other pupils work in a local information technology training business. Staff from the business told the inspection team that these pupils' performance in the work place is exemplary. As a result, pupils are well prepared to find further education, training or employment in these industries.

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision**

**Good**

- The overall experiences and progress of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy their residential stays and their positive experiences help them make progress in their school and home life.
- Leaders and managers promote a culture of high expectations and aspirations. Pupils speak positively of the care and support they receive. Pupils' comments include: 'I really like staying here and [I also like] the meals and activities' and 'I feel safe and am not worried about bullying'.
- Pupils enjoy an excellent range of in-house and community activities that provide opportunities to socialise with their peers outside the classroom. These experiences give pupils the opportunity to develop confidence and a range of skills that improves their self-esteem. Mealtimes are sociable occasions. Pupils and staff sit together chatting, modelling family routines.
- Healthcare arrangements are good. Pupils receive good support from an in-house therapy team and external specialists. Medication is managed safely.
- The physical environment has been extensively improved since the last full inspection in January 2016. A significant financial investment has resulted in pupils having access to ensuite single bedrooms along with spacious and attractive living and recreational areas. The creation of an area for parents to use for coffee mornings and mutual support is also proving very successful.
- Some pupils do not have access to a lockable facility within their bedrooms or opportunities to personalise their rooms.

## School details

Unique reference number	113649
Social care unique reference number	SC038087
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10033146

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.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Number of boarders on roll	15
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Lowry
Headteacher	Brett Storry
Telephone number	01752 365128
Website	<a href="http://www.mounttamar.org.uk/">www.mounttamar.org.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:mount.tamar.school@plymouth.gov.uk">mount.tamar.school@plymouth.gov.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Mount Tamar is a residential special school, maintained by Plymouth City Council. The school caters for pupils aged from five to 16 who have complex needs, including autism, and severe emotional, social and mental health difficulties. There are currently no children in the early years in the school.
- The school has recently refurbished the residential accommodation. During the refurbishment, no pupils were resident in this setting. The residential setting currently

caters for 13 pupils who attend the school.

- The majority of the pupils are White British and there are significantly more boys than girls.
- There are currently 101 pupils on roll. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school is based on its main site in Row Lane. The school also operates six off-site 'Aspire' centres in the City of Plymouth. These centres provide education for pupils with a history of poor attendance or complex social, emotional and mental health needs. One of these off-site settings is a farm where pupils go to learn land management skills.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding provided for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school was previously inspected in March 2015. At this time, the overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement. The subsequent monitoring inspection in July 2015 found that leaders were taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement at the previous inspection.
- The most recent inspection of the school's residential provision took place in January 2016, when the overall experiences and progress of children and young people were found to be good.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that historical safeguarding concerns are being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate concerns of this kind, the actions taken by the school in response to those concerns were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- The inspection of the school was integrated with an inspection of the residential provision.
- Inspectors visited classrooms with leaders on both days of the inspection to evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, in the residential provision in the evenings, at break and lunchtimes and during lessons. They spoke with pupils and staff throughout the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, and the director of inclusion, staff and governors, including the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with the national leader of education who supports the school and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including that relating to safeguarding, the record-keeping of behaviour incidents, including restraint, the school's plans for improvement and information about pupils' achievement. They also looked in detail at pupils' work in a range of subjects in all year groups when in lessons and during a work scrutiny, carried out with the assistant headteachers.
- One inspector visited four off-site provision centres to check the quality of safeguarding arrangements, attendance of pupils and the quality of education provided to the pupils.
- The lead inspector analysed 29 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and responses to the parent text service. She spoke with the head of the virtual schools for Plymouth and Bristol. In addition, the inspectors spoke with foster carers by telephone and parents in person during the sports day taking place during the inspection. The inspection team analysed 46 responses to the staff questionnaire and 15 responses from pupils.

## Inspection team

Catherine Leahy, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie Nash

Ofsted Inspector

Norma Welsby

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

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