

Tower House School

Fisher Street, Paignton, Devon TQ4 5EW

Inspection dates

13 December 2017

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2 and 3

- The quality of teaching and learning in the senior school does not enable pupils in Years 7 to 9 to make the progress they should. The long-term absence of some teachers, and vacancies among the teaching staff, mean that pupils do not benefit from the specialist teaching that they require. Pupils reported that there are aspects of the curriculum that have not been taught for several months. Leaders confirmed this.
- The provision in the junior school (Reception Year to Year 6) is much stronger. Teachers plan learning well, taking account of pupils' needs. Assessment in the junior school is used effectively to adapt learning based on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- In all classes, teachers do not have the resources they need for aesthetic and creative learning activities. Few of the school's computers are working and there has been no internet access for some time. As a result, pupils cannot carry out internet research or complete tasks on computers when at school.
- Leaders have not ensured that there is a programme in place for senior-school pupils to receive careers advice and guidance.
- The standards regarding the quality of education are not met.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5

- Teachers have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has remained a priority.
- Through 'project-based learning', teachers skilfully craft learning activities from across the curriculum to widen pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding. For example, when studying 'the animal kingdom' recently, pupils explored the relationship between creation, based on Biblical teaching, and science. They also considered their own responsibility to look after the environment and each other.
- Younger pupils learn about different countries, faiths and cultures as they explore texts, such as 'The Elephant's Child' by Rudyard Kipling.

- Teachers use their links with the local fire and rescue service and coastguard to help pupils understand public institutions.
- The standard in this part is met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7

- The proprietor has not ensured that the arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are effective.
- The school's safeguarding policy was updated earlier this month. It has regard to the latest guidance issued by the Secretary of State, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2016), and is available to parents on request. However, the policy is not implemented effectively.
- Leaders who have specific responsibility for safeguarding are not all suitably trained.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the required checks are carried out on all staff members, agency staff and volunteers. As a result, the proprietor and leaders cannot assure themselves that staff are suitable to work with children.

Paragraph 11

- The school's health and safety policy is not effectively implemented.
- At the time of the inspection, the premises had not been cleaned for some time. Waste bins were overflowing and the toilets were unclean.
- Temporary repairs, for example to damaged guttering, pose a danger to pupils' safety. A number of single-glazed windows have broken panes.
- The standards for pupils' welfare, health and safety are not met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraphs 18, 19 and 21

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the necessary pre-employment vetting checks have been carried out for all members of staff and volunteers. Consequently, the safety of pupils cannot be assured.
- The required information from employment businesses concerning supply staff is not sufficiently recorded.
- Owing to the absence of the required checks, the single central register is not maintained to the requirements of the standard.
- The registration authority carried out the necessary checks on the new proprietor in October 2017, approximately four months after the proprietorship changed. These checks were found to be satisfactory.
- The standards with respect to the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors are not met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 25

- The premises are in a poor state of repair.

- Many teaching rooms are very cold and draughty. Windows do not fasten securely and some have broken panes of glass. Gutters are blocked or damaged.
- The toilets have not been cleaned for some time and are unhygienic.
- The standard in this part is not met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The proprietor has not ensured that a complaints procedure is in place. There is no log on which complaints can be recorded.
- No provision has been made by the proprietor for a parent to have their complaint heard by a panel. This is required where the parent is not satisfied by the response following an attempt to resolve the matter informally. Furthermore, there are no arrangements in place for a person independent of the management and running of the school to join the appeals panel.
- The standard with regard to the handling of complaints is not met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The proprietor and headteacher have not ensured that all the independent school standards have been met. While they have ensured that the quality of education meets requirements in the junior school, they have not ensured that a good quality of education has been maintained in the senior school.
- The lack of financial investment in the school has adversely affected the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding do not have sufficient regard to the most recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- The standard in this paragraph is not met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has not ensured that the requirements set out in paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 have been met. Much of the premises is accessed by steep stairways and no accessibility plan is in place to show how leaders would make necessary adaptations, should these be necessary.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	113612
DfE registration number	880/6004
Inspection number	10044613

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.

Type of school	Day school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kirsten Clayton
Headteacher	Suki Powar
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,200 to £9,600
Telephone number	01803 557077
Website	No website
Email address	enquiries@towerhouseschool.com
Date of previous standard inspection	14–16 June 2016

Information about this school

- Tower House School is a non-selective independent day school. It opened in 1982 and consists of three departments: the seniors (Years 7 to 11); the juniors (Years 1 to 6); and the early years department.
- A new proprietor took over the school in May 2017. A new headteacher took up post in September 2017. The school is currently known as 'The Element School'; however, it continues to be registered with the Department for Education as 'Tower House School'.
- Since September 2017, significant numbers of pupils and members of staff have left the school. There are now no pupils aged over 14 attending the school.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident that had occurred since the previous inspection involving a child who used to attend this school. While

Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

- The school has a small number of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans or a statement of special educational needs.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The previous standard inspection of the school was in June 2016.

Information about this inspection

- This emergency inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools following a number of complaints regarding the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' welfare and safety.
- The inspection was carried out with no notice.
- The inspection focused on the quality of education provided by the school, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils' health, safety and welfare, the suitability of staff and supply staff to work with children, and procedures for handling complaints. The procedures for safeguarding pupils were scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of staff and pupils. One inspector spoke with the proprietor by telephone.
- Inspectors analysed a range of documentation provided by the school.
- The lead inspector observed pupils' learning in classes, reviewed teachers' plans and reviewed pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account the complaints that had been received by the registration authority since the previous inspection.
- One inspector spoke to the local authority designated officer (LADO) by telephone.

Inspection team

Iain Freeland, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Emmy Tomsett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 2(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 2(1)(a) the proprietor ensures that a written policy on the curriculum, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, which provides for the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) is drawn up and implemented effectively; and
 - 2(1)(b) the written policy, plans and schemes of work–
 - 2(1)(b)(i) take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils, including those pupils with an EHC plan.
- 2(2) For the purposes of paragraph (2)(1)(a), the matters are–
 - 2(2)(a) full-time supervised education for pupils of compulsory school age (construed in accordance with section 8 of the Education Act 1996), which gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education;
 - 2(2)(e) for pupils receiving secondary education, access to accurate, up-to-date careers guidance that–
 - 2(2)(e)(i) is presented in an impartial manner;
 - 2(2)(e)(ii) enables them to make informed choices about a broad range of career options; and
 - 2(2)(e)(iii) helps to encourage them to fulfil their potential;
 - 2(2)(i) effective preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.
- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school–
 - 3(a) enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught;
 - 3(c) involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time;
 - 3(d) shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the

pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons;

- 3(e) demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught;
- 3(f) utilises effectively classroom resources of a good quality, quantity and range;
- 3(g) demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and uses information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
 - 18(2)(c)(i) the person's identity;
 - 18(2)(c)(ii) the person's medical fitness;
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person's right to work in the United Kingdom; and

- 18(2)(c)(iv) where appropriate, the person’s qualifications;
 - 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person’s appointment;
 - 18(2)(e) in the case of any person for whom, by reason of that person living or having lived outside the United Kingdom, obtaining such a certificate is not sufficient to establish the person’s suitability to work in a school, such further checks are made as the proprietor considers appropriate, having regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person’s appointment.
 - 19(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
 - 19(2)(a) a person offered for supply by an employment business to the school only begins to work at the school if the proprietor has received–
 - 19(2)(a)(i) written notification from the employment business in relation to that person–
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(aa) that the checks referred to in paragraph 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vii) and (b) have been made to the extent relevant to that person;
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(bb) that, where relevant to that person, an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check; and
 - 19(2)(a)(i)(cc) if the employment business has obtained such a certificate before the person is due to begin work at the school, whether it disclosed any matter or information; and
 - 19(2)(a)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate obtained by an employment business before the person is due to begin work at the school;
 - 19(2)(b) a person offered for supply by an employment business only begins work at the school if the proprietor considers that the person is suitable for the work for which the person is supplied;
 - 19(2)(c) before a person offered for supply by an employment business begins work at the school the person’s identity is checked by the proprietor of the school (irrespective of any such check carried out by the employment business before the person was offered for supply);
 - 19(2)(d) the proprietor, in the contract or other arrangements which the proprietor

makes with any employment business, requires the employment business to provide–

- 19(2)(d)(i) the notification referred to in paragraph (a)(i); and
- 19(2)(d)(ii) a copy of any enhanced criminal record certificate which the employment business obtains.
- 19(3) Except in the case of a person to whom sub-paragraph (4) applies, the certificate referred to in sub-paragraph (2)(a)(i)(bb) must have been obtained not more than 3 months before the date on which the person is due to begin work at the school.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(2) The register referred to in sub-paragraph (1) may be kept in electronic form, provided that the information so recorded is capable of being reproduced in legible form.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff (“S”) appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
 - 21(3)(a)(i) S’s identity was checked;
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(iv) checks were made to ensure, where appropriate, that S had the relevant qualifications;
 - 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
 - 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S’s right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
 - 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e).
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff (“S”), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.

- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.
- 21(5) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to supply staff–
 - 21(5)(a) whether written notification has been received from the employment business that–
 - 21(5)(a)(i) checks corresponding to those referred to in sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) to (iv), (vi) and (vii) have been made to the extent relevant to any such person; and
 - 21(5)(a)(ii) an enhanced criminal record check has been made and that it or another employment business has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate in response to such a check;
 - 21(5)(b) whether a check has been made in accordance with paragraph 19(2)(e) together with the date the check was completed; and
 - 21(5)(c) where written notification has been received from the employment business in accordance with a contract or other arrangements referred to in paragraph 19(2)(d) that it has obtained an enhanced criminal record certificate, whether the employment business supplied a copy of the certificate to the school.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which–
 - 33(a) is in writing;
 - 33(b) is made available to parents of pupils;
 - 33(c) sets out clear time scales for the management of a complaint;
 - 33(d) allows for a complaint to be made and considered initially on an informal basis;

- 33(e) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (d), establishes a formal procedure for the complaint to be made in writing;
- 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
- 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
- 33(h) allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish;
- 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is–
- 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
- 33(i)(ii) available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the head teacher;
- 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and–
- 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
- 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
- 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
- 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards

are met consistently; and

- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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