

Totnes Progressive School

Windmill House, Ashburton Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5JT

Inspection dates

16–18 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
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 closely monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. As a result, teaching varies in quality and lacks consistency of approach.
- Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those who are higher and lower attaining pupils. These pupils do not make strong enough progress.
- Assessments of what pupils can do are not yet accurate. As a result, work that teachers plan for pupils does not always match pupils' capabilities.
- The teaching of mathematics varies across the school. It does not take into account fully the needs of pupils and lacks challenge.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of their pupils. In some classes, teachers expect the most from pupils but this is not always the case across the school.
- Roles and responsibilities across the leadership team are not yet fully established. Leaders do not have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Leaders are not clear about the impact that interventions and support provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities have on these pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have created a caring, nurturing environment, steeped in mutual respect. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong.
- Pupils make strong progress in drama, Spanish and physics because the quality of teaching is typically strong.
- Leaders have placed well-being firmly at the heart of the school. Pupils, parents and carers value the transformational impact it has had and the level of pastoral care is highly regarded.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact and effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, by making sure that:
 - leaders carry out rigorous checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and ensure consistency of approach across the school
 - leaders carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively to ensure that pupils gain knowledge, understanding and skills in all areas of the curriculum
 - leaders have a clear understanding of the impact of interventions for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the progress that they make
 - standards are raised across the school to match the high expectations across key stage 4
 - best practice is identified and shared across the school so that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistent
 - leaders establish effective assessment and tracking systems which are carefully monitored and used to inform accurate target-setting for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that:
 - teachers consistently make effective use of ongoing assessments to plan work correctly so that pupils, particularly higher attaining pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress
 - teachers consistently adapt lessons to meet the emerging needs of pupils
 - teachers have the highest expectations for all pupils, particularly for how pupils present their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. The quality of pupils' workbooks varies from class to class. Leaders have not identified weaknesses, and they have not had sufficient opportunities to raise standards in their areas of responsibility. As a result, leaders have not challenged poor teaching and the quality of education is variable across the school.
- Leaders are not able to demonstrate the progress that pupils make while at Totnes Progressive School. Leaders acknowledge that as the school community continues to grow, there is a need to improve monitoring and assessment systems across the school. While leaders have attempted to rectify this, they have more work to do to improve this aspect of the school.
- Leaders acknowledge the need to share expectations and effective practice clearly across the school. Where teaching, learning and assessment are strongest, pupils make strong rates of progress and expectations are high. Where there is strong practice, this is not shared to enhance the consistency and quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Teaching, learning and assessment do not sufficiently match the needs of pupils. Leaders have not had opportunities to moderate the quality of pupils' work alongside assessment information. In some instances, this has led to work being too easy. Leaders acknowledge the need to work with teachers to monitor work in pupils' books and to align teachers' expectations with accurate assessment information.
- Leaders are not wholly clear on the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make across the school. Pupils who have education, health and care plans (EHC plans) are well monitored and progress is evident. However, for other pupils without these plans, interventions are not tracked and there is uncertainty about the progress that these pupils are making. As a result, there is a lack of clarity about the quality and effectiveness of support and interventions that leaders provide.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met. Leaders have acted strategically and on advice from pre-registration visits and further guidance.
- Leaders are striving for excellence and are resolute that they will be successful. They have established a school where pupil numbers are rapidly increasing and parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the positive impact that the school has had in only a short period of time. Leaders have created a culture which is deeply rooted in mutual respect, understanding each individual in the school community and taking into account the well-being and happiness of all it serves.
- Pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Leaders have placed great emphasis on ensuring that pupils have a rounded curriculum, deep-rooted in well-being. As pupils move through the school, they receive significant opportunities to further develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of subjects such as religious education. As a result, pupils enjoy the diversity of the curriculum and speak knowledgeably about different cultures and traditions.

Governance

- The school's development team manages the governance of the school. It is a small team which meets regularly to discuss current developments at the school and maintain an overview of key issues such as building development. Leaders acknowledge the need to undertake training to help them carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively, especially as the number of pupils is increasing.
- The development team does not have a detailed overview of the school's performance. Leaders understand that they are not monitoring attendance, quality of teaching, learning and assessment or pupils' outcomes closely enough. They have a general understanding but recognise that they are not yet fully able to hold leaders to account or comment on the specific strengths and areas for development across the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders respond in a timely manner when concerns arise and involve external agencies appropriately. Leaders keep detailed records and demonstrate a proportionate response when concerns arise. Leaders ensure that all staff receive high-quality training on safeguarding and that their expectations are very clear about members of staff passing on concerns about pupils. As a result, leaders can demonstrate how their actions have resulted in keeping pupils safe.
- Leaders manage the procedures in place for recruiting staff well. Leaders conduct the necessary employment checks on all members of staff so that only those who are suitable to work with children are employed. Once these checks are complete, leaders record details of each check on the school's single central record. This record is well organised and easy to navigate. Leaders acknowledge that although this record is kept up to date, it is good practice for leaders and governors to carry out regular checks as well as ensuring that the local authority safeguarding audit is regularly completed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment do not consistently meet the needs of pupils. Where the quality of teaching is strong, such as in key stage 4, teachers challenge pupils to achieve well and expectations are high. These teachers use effective assessment information to inform activities and their pupils' progress is strong. Where the quality of teaching is not as strong, teachers do not plan tasks effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress. As a result, the rate of progress that pupils make varies from class to class.
- Teachers do not consistently provide feedback in line with the school's expectations. The quality of feedback varies from class to class. In the strongest examples, feedback informs pupils of emerging needs and well-informed challenge or support is provided. In other classes, feedback is not consistent and misconceptions arise and continue over time. As a result, pupils' progress varies.
- The quality of mathematics teaching varies considerably across the school. Teaching does not sufficiently take account of what pupils already know, can do and understand. As a result, expectations vary. Furthermore, the mathematics curriculum is not yet planned in detail. As a result, pupils do not acquire a well-rounded mathematics curriculum over

time.

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve vary across the school. The quality of work that pupils produce varies from class to class. There are marked differences in the quality of pupils' presentation and the quality of activities provided. Where expectations are high, pupils' work is well presented and activities are well matched to challenge each pupil. However, where expectations are lower, there is evidence of poor presentation and poorly planned activities which limit pupils' progress.
- Teaching does not challenge all groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils are not consistently challenged, and, on occasion, activities are too easy. The support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities lacks the precision needed to meet their specific needs, particularly for pupils who are recognised as having SEN and/or disabilities but do not have an EHC plan. Consequently, their progress slows.
- Younger learners in the school do not have opportunities to develop their writing. Evidence in pupils' workbooks confirms little evidence of writing at length or across a range of genres. As a result, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for the increased expectations as they move in to the next year groups.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in some subjects is particularly strong. In physics lessons, pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding across a clear sequence of lessons and there is evidence of cross-curricular learning. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge accurately and draw precise conclusions from their investigations. In some cases, the mathematical challenge in these lessons is greater than in mathematics lessons. As a result, pupils make strong progress.
- In English lessons, pupils receive high-quality challenge and support. Pupils are able to talk with one another and hold meaningful discussions about what they are learning. Teachers skilfully question pupils, using knowledge of each pupil to draw out responses and extend their thinking. As a result, pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well and apply the knowledge of what they are learning effectively.
- Teachers ensure that parents receive valuable information about pupils' progress. Parents receive three reports each academic year, providing information about short-term progress as well as about learning attitudes in each subject area. Parents value the information in these reports, particularly the emphasis on learning attitudes and pupils' well-being. Consequently, parents are well informed about the progress that pupils are making.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils have positive relationships with adults, which are steeped in mutual respect. Pupils feel valued. As a result, relationships are strong, and advice and challenge are well received. This results in a nurturing environment with personal development at its core.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured. They are proud of their school and speak passionately about the transformational effect it has had on them. They believe that the school has had a positive influence on them and teachers instil a sense of belief that they

did not have in previous educational settings.

- Parents are extremely positive about the impact the school has had on their children. They value the holistic approach of the school and how leaders promote well-being. They confirm that behaviour is strong and relationships between staff and pupils are positive because staff truly care and pupils recognise this. One parent's view which reflected the views of many was, 'I honestly cannot speak highly enough about this school and its staff. Every single person seems to care deeply and wholeheartedly about my son... even those who do not teach him directly.'
- Pupils in key stage 4 are well informed about the next stage of their education. Pupils make choices based on informed career pathways. Pupils speak knowledgeably about where they wish to go after their school life at Totnes Progressive School and how to reach their aspirations. Pupils in key stage 4 have very clear aspirations for their future.
- The quality of presentation in pupils' books is variable. In some cases, the workbooks do not reflect the progress made and are poorly presented. Although pupils clearly value their education at Totnes Progressive School, their workbooks do not consistently reflect this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils speak confidently about how leaders promote good behaviour and a school where bullying does not occur. All pupils, regardless of age, converse with one another in a courteous manner. As a result, the school is calm and purposeful.
- Where attendance has been weak, it has shown significant improvements in this academic year. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling and those with attendance above national averages is rising. Leaders confirm that they will need to continue to monitor and ensure that attendance continues to improve.
- Pupils' behaviour across the school is a strength. Pupils are punctual to lessons and conduct themselves well in and out of lessons. In lessons, pupils are enthusiastic, and speak passionately about what they are learning. As a result, pupils hold positive attitudes towards their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Higher attaining pupils do not make consistently strong progress, particularly in mathematics. Pupils often find activities too easy and lacking the challenge required to help them further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. As a result, higher attaining pupils do not make consistently strong progress and work in books is not indicative of what they are capable of.
- Leaders are unclear about how pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make progress across the school. Leaders have arranged support and interventions but leaders and teachers are unsure if this support enables pupils to make strong progress. As a result, the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make varies across the school.
- Pupils in upper key stages 3 and 4 develop strong understanding in English language lessons. Pupils develop their understanding of the writer's use of language and its impact

on the reader. They can discuss how the text makes them feel, experiment with vocabulary and enhance their opinions with high-quality evidence. As a result, pupils make strong progress.

- Pupils do not make consistently strong progress across the curriculum. Due to the variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils' progress fluctuates accordingly. Consequently, pupils do not acquire a secure body of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. However, the raised expectations in key stage 4 result in a high proportion of pupils attaining strong outcomes in their GCSE examinations.
- In specific subject areas, pupils make strong progress. In Spanish, pupils quickly and effectively develop their speaking skills. In drama, pupils receive the highest quality feedback which helps them refine their performance, as well as effectively review that of their peers. Expectations of what pupils can achieve in physics are very high. As a result, pupils make stronger progress in these areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils make strong progress in English literature. Reading sessions enthuse pupils and they are passionate about what they are learning. Opportunities to read are frequent. Pupils develop a well-rounded knowledge of authors and playwrights, characters, and books and scripts that they have read. Pupils speak confidently with one another and develop the skills they need to be able to closely examine a text for its meaning.
- Pupils articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly. They use appropriate vocabulary for their age and beyond, and hold meaningful conversations with one another. Pupils demonstrate their understanding about what they have learned and are succinct in explaining processes. They debate and share ideas in a mature way.

School details

Unique reference number	143947
DfE registration number	878/6068
Inspection number	10041384

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	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Totnes Progressive School Ltd
Headteacher	Ross Robens
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,600–£8,145
Telephone number	01803 864484
Website	www.totnesprogressiveschool.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@top-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is the school's first inspection since opening. The school first opened with only few pupils. Currently, there are 107 pupils on roll, aged from 10 to 16 years. The number of pupils attending the school has grown to reflect the increasing popularity of the school.
- The school has pupil well-being and mindfulness at the heart of its core values. Daily circle time and weekly 'happiness and well-being' sessions form part of the curriculum.
- There is a significant proportion of pupils identified as having SEN and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed pupils' learning in all classes across the school, mostly jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher and senior and middle leaders. In addition, the inspector met with the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the leader of the development group.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a number of documents including school improvement plans and leaders' monitoring records of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector, together with the headteacher, looked at pupils' work in books to establish the current quality of pupils' work and progress over time.
- The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour and spoke with two groups of pupils to seek their views about the school.
- The lead inspector considered 39 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and also considered staff surveys.
- The lead inspector considered the school's material change to increase the age range from 10 to 16 to nine to 16. This material change was approved.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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