

# On Track Education Centre Totnes

Parragon Building, Ford Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5LQ

## Inspection dates

3–5 July 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Sixth form provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong team. Together, they provide effective leadership. As a result, staff are well motivated and committed to their jobs.
- Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, often from very low starting points.
- Pupils build their confidence and self-esteem quickly. Many pupils' communication skills are weak when they join the school. They develop speaking and listening skills well as their confidence grows. However, some pupils' writing skills do not improve at the same rate.
- Teaching is highly individualised. The curriculum is closely matched to pupils' aptitudes and aspirations.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to question pupils well and explain concepts effectively. However, teachers' knowledge of different types of special educational needs is not broad enough.
- Pupils' personal development is promoted well. Many vulnerable pupils are kept safe and are taught to recognise and avoid unsafe situations.
- Pupils' behaviour is generally good. Over time, the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced significantly. Teachers are calm and patient when pupils are anxious or tense.
- Attendance has improved markedly in the last two years. Even so, senior leaders recognise that further improvement in the rate of pupils' attendance is necessary.
- Sixth-form students follow personalised study programmes that integrate work experience well with academic and vocational courses.
- Senior leaders gather good-quality information about pupils' attainment and progress. Nevertheless, their analysis of this information is not yet sharp enough.
- Senior leaders provide risk assessments for off-site activities. However, some of these are not specific enough to the particular activity.

### 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 quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
  - ensuring that teachers place more emphasis on pupils' spelling and handwriting in subjects other than English in key stages 4 and 5
  - providing teachers with further training so they have a deeper understanding of different types of special educational needs.
- Increase the rate of pupils' attendance by continuing to work closely with the most vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all risk assessments of off-site activities precisely consider the risks involved in those specific activities and are reviewed frequently
  - improving senior leaders' analysis of information about pupils' attainment and progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The headteacher leads the school calmly and confidently. She communicates her vision for the school well and so staff understand what is expected of them. Staff share her vision; their morale is high. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well. As a team, they provide effective oversight of the school's facilities at Totnes and West Yarner. The independent school standards are met in full.
- Senior leaders have introduced a new system for gathering information about pupils' achievement. Senior leaders now have access to accurate and timely information. However, their methods of analysing this information are not fully established and so they are not yet getting the full benefit the new system offers.
- Middle leaders have improved the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility, particularly by improving the frequency and accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, middle leaders have ensured that teachers' planning is consistently good.
- Senior leaders monitor the performance of staff well. They provide suitable training for staff to develop their skills, for example the recent training about autistic spectrum disorder. However, senior leaders accept that staff need further training to deepen their understanding of the range of pupils' special educational needs.
- The school provides a curriculum that is based on a thorough evaluation of pupils' prior learning. Staff provide flexible teaching programmes. They use different methods and locations in order to draw pupils back into full-time education when often they have had poor experiences in the past. Staff adapt teaching to suit pupils' academic and personal needs. As a result, the curriculum closely matches pupils' individual needs, which enables them to make good progress.
- Leadership of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is enthusiastic and effective. This programme is successfully threaded through the curriculum and so pupils develop a good understanding of British values and the need to respect other people's viewpoints and beliefs.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Teachers spend a significant amount of time talking to pupils in key worker discussions. Pupils think carefully about contemporary issues such as gender equality during these discussions.
- Many parents take the opportunity to provide feedback to the school when they reply to the school's reports about pupils' progress. Parents are positive about the education and care provided by the school. They particularly value the flexibility that staff show in dealing with pupils' complex social and emotional needs.

### Governance

- The proprietor has successfully taken action to ensure that the independent school standards are fully met.

- The proprietor has ensured that the plan put forward after the previous inspection to enable the school to meet particular standards has been followed through and implemented in detail. For example, building work has been carried out at the Totnes site to provide better access to the building and facilities for pupils with disabilities.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school publishes a safeguarding policy on its website that is in line with current legislation.
- Senior leaders carry out rigorous checks on all staff before they are appointed to make sure they are suitable to work with children. Staff receive regular updates and reminders and so they are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and remain vigilant.
- The school works with a range of other organisations successfully to make sure that pupils are kept safe and are given the support they need. Parents believe pupils are well cared for and feel safe at the school.
- Although the requirements for risk assessments are met, these could be enhanced by considering in more detail the specific hazards that off-site venues may present. This will allow leaders to implement more precise controls to minimise the likelihood or severity of any risk to pupils or members of staff.

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

**Good**

- Most teaching is provided on a one-to-one basis. Teachers know their pupils very well. They recognise the needs of individual pupils and so adjust their teaching accordingly to suit pupils' circumstances. For example, teachers recognise when pupils are feeling anxious and modify their plans to allow discussion of pupils' feelings.
- Teachers assess pupils' skills accurately when they join the school. Middle leaders use this information well to select courses for pupils which match their ability. Teachers' planning takes good account of regular assessments of pupils' attainment, and so work set for pupils is suitably challenging.
- Senior leaders have provided training for teachers this year to ensure that teaching is based on clear objectives about what pupils should know and understand. As a result, teaching is well structured and purposeful.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in their subject areas. However, some do not have a broad understanding of the increasingly wide range of special educational needs pupils join the school with.
- Teachers use questioning well to pinpoint sensitively the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' understanding. This allows teachers to deal quickly with pupils' misconceptions while retaining good relationships with them.
- In key stages 4 and 5, teaching in subjects other than English does not pay sufficient regard to pupils' literacy skills. This leads to some pupils' spelling and handwriting being weaker than it should be.

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers assess pupils' social skills when they join the school and continue to track their progress in developing these skills. Teachers provide effective support for pupils, which nurtures their self-confidence. Pupils' emotional health is developed well because teachers provide intensive support through one-to-one tuition.
- Pupils show pride in their achievements. Teachers are adept at celebrating good pieces of work or significant steps in pupils' self-confidence. As a result, and reinforced by senior leaders' emphasis on rewards, pupils gradually develop greater self-esteem. This is demonstrated by pupils' growing ability and willingness to communicate confidently with adults.
- Pupils are kept safe at school. Pupils trust their teachers. They recognise the care that all staff take over pupils' welfare and safety. Consequently, pupils feel well cared for.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are able to recognise situations where others might try to influence them or cause them harm. For example, pupils are aware of the need to avoid sharing personal information on the internet.
- Pupils are aware of their responsibilities as citizens to consider other people's needs. Teachers recently highlighted the plight of displaced persons during 'refugee week'. Subsequent teaching reinforced the theme well by asking pupils to choose items to go into an emergency-relief box providing shelter and food for refugees.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff work closely with families and social workers to identify pupils' needs and, in turn, help pupils to begin to understand their own emotions. Staff form trusting relationships with pupils, often in a short period of time. As a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons is typically calm and attentive.
- Teachers and other adults are trained to take a non-confrontational approach to managing pupils' behaviour. This approach has been successful in recent years. The rate of fixed-term exclusion from the school is low.
- Teachers maintain a high level of supervision of pupils throughout the school day. At both the Totnes site and the West Yarner site, this leads to a positive and good-humoured atmosphere at lunchtime and breaktime.
- Pupils generally treat the buildings with respect. Although pupils do occasionally cause damage to classrooms and communal spaces, this is infrequent. Teachers' efforts to decorate and put up interesting wall displays are paying dividends. Pupils see the learning environment as welcoming and inviting.
- Pupils' rate of attendance has risen steeply in recent years. Senior leaders have successfully communicated high expectations of pupils' attendance through newsletters and other contact with parents and carers. However, senior leaders recognise that the

rate of pupils' attendance is still not high enough and too many pupils are persistently absent from school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage in their education because the curriculum includes courses which develop their employability skills. For example, all key stage 4 pupils and sixth-form students take part in a preparation for working life programme.
- Pupils join the school with a wide variety of academic starting points. Pupils take a range of academic and vocational courses including functional skills and entry-level qualifications. When they are ready, some move on to study for GCSE qualifications. The proportion of pupils successfully attaining GCSE qualifications is rising over time.
- The majority of pupils make good progress in English and mathematics from their different starting points. More pupils than previously were successful at GCSE level in 2017, and inspection evidence shows that current pupils have also achieved well, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding well in science. Year 11 pupils make good progress in biology.
- Many pupils' communication skills are underdeveloped when they arrive at the school. This has often hindered these pupils' learning in their previous education. However, they make progress and develop more confidence in speaking and listening skills. For example, Year 6 pupils are able to make presentations to their teachers and peers. However, pupils, particularly in key stages 4 and 5, make less progress in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## Sixth form provision

**Good**

- The headteacher has responsibility for the leadership of the sixth form and provides similarly strong leadership as in the rest of the school. Post-16 students are integrated fully into the work of the school. The same systems and practices are used for them as all other pupils.
- Post-16 students' study programmes are designed around their individual needs following a close evaluation of their aptitudes when they join the school. Students are studying level 1 and level 2 qualifications in both academic and vocational subjects. The majority of students make good progress academically and in their social and personal development.
- As with other teaching at the school, most teaching takes place on a one-to-one basis. Teachers are specialists in their subjects. Teachers work with individual students intensively and so they know them very well. This allows planning to closely reflect students' interests. For example, in GCSE art, students' preferences for particular media are taken into account when teaching programmes are designed.
- Students reported they find frequent discussion time with key workers helpful. As a result of these discussions, and through PSHE teaching, students' personal development, behaviour and welfare in the sixth form are good. Teachers track students' social and

emotional development effectively and set targets for improvement. They plan teaching, discussions and therapeutic work with these targets in mind.

- Students feel safe and secure at the school. Teaching enables students to understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations.
- Students who do not attain a GCSE grade 4 or better in English and/or mathematics before starting post-16 programmes continue to study these subjects. Senior leaders see the development of students' skills in both of these subjects as a core part of the curriculum. As a result of effective teaching, students improve their skills in English and mathematics.
- Senior leaders ensure that students are given suitable work-experience placements and other work-related experiences. For example, students studying vocational programmes in digital media studies are offered placements in local radio stations. These placements enhance students' academic work and their confidence.
- The vast majority of students find places in further education, training or employment when they leave. The school has well-developed links with local colleges and employers. Students' transition from the school into college courses or employment is made easier because school staff use these links effectively to help students adjust to their new settings.

## School details

Unique reference number	131715
DfE registration number	878/6060
Inspection number	10047183

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 Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	17
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	On Track Education Services Ltd
Chair	Jane Cox
Headteacher	Julie Dixon-Higgins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,728–£88,008
Telephone number	01803 866 462
Website	<a href="http://www.ontrackededucationservices.com">www.ontrackededucationservices.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:totnes@ontrackededucation.com">totnes@ontrackededucation.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	17–19 May 2016

## Information about this school

- On Track Education Centre Totnes is smaller than the average-sized special school.
- The school operates from two sites, two miles apart, Totnes and West Yarner.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All pupils currently on roll have an education, health and care plan. Many



pupils have autistic spectrum disorder.

- Pupils are placed at the school by local authorities including Torbay Council, Devon County Council, Cornwall County Council and Plymouth City Council. Nine pupils are children looked after.
- The school currently does not use any alternative providers.
- The previous standard inspection took place on 17–19 May 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector held meetings with a director of On Track Education Ltd. He met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and staff.
- The lead inspector observed learning in a range of subjects including mathematics, English, science, computing and art. He scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work and spoke with pupils from each key stage both formally and informally.
- The lead inspector toured the Totnes and West Yarnar sites to assess the suitability of their facilities.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- An inspector visited several venues where the school's outreach tutors were providing off-site tuition for pupils.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, the lead inspector took into account information provided to the school by several parents about their view of the school.
- The lead inspector considered twenty-two responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

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