

Inspection of Mount Tamar School

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

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are being let down. They do not receive the quality of education and care they deserve. Staff expect too little and lack clarity about managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils' special educational needs are not being met. This means lessons are disrupted and pupils are not learning enough. They are prepared very poorly for their next steps.

Pupils' attitudes are poor. Pupils are not engaged in learning. The lack of clear expectations and worthwhile activities make this worse. Many pupils show a lack of respect for each other and for staff. Violent behaviour is common. Staff do not have the skills to manage difficult behaviour. Pupils say they are bullied. Staff agree. Both say it is dealt with badly.

Pupils, their parents and staff are right to agree that pupils are not safe. Pupils frequently leave the site or climb on the roof. They do not trust staff to look after them. Processes to deal with safeguarding issues are not effective.

There is very low morale among the staff. They are concerned that they will be hurt by pupils. Many are openly critical of leaders.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Low expectations of pupils and an absence of basic routines mean that pupils learn little.

The curriculum is not fit for purpose. There are a range of different provisions, alternative providers, interventions, options and subjects. However, there is no coherent overview to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The curriculum is not adapted for pupils' special educational needs. Leaders and teachers give little attention to the education, health and care (EHC) plans of pupils. Assessment is weak and does not guide teaching sufficiently. Leaders do not use what they know to improve the curriculum. Many teachers do not have the skills and knowledge they need. This means that the quality of what pupils receive is poor.

Early reading is weak. Staff training is out of date. Staff do not have the skills and knowledge to support pupils to become fluent readers. Pupils do not learn to value or enjoy reading.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is not tailored to the needs of pupils. Many pupils have a primary need of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. However, the curriculum is not adapted to help them better understand how to stay safe or understand fundamental British values, such as equality and the rule of law. Consequently, given the nature of their special educational needs, pupils are at significant risk of exploitation or radicalisation.

Careers education is not good enough. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. However, too little thought is given to the link between curriculum design and pupils' pathways into employment.

Staff and pupils describe some aspects of the school that are better. Pupils are proud of their design and technology projects. Pupils behave better in some off-site provisions and feel safer. These examples are isolated and do not reflect the overall inadequacy of pupils' experience of school.

Staff are weary from recent changes that have been introduced by interim leaders. Some staff are critical of current leaders. They do not feel safe. Performance management is inadequate. Staff turnover is high. The new headteacher has grasped what needs to be done. The interim executive board (IEB) members are aware of the seriousness of the situation. However, they have not been in place for long enough to have the impact that is needed.

Most parents who replied to the online survey were very critical of the school and would not recommend it to others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Safeguarding systems are disjointed and not effective. Leaders' oversight is poor. Concerns are not always acted upon or followed up. There are significant weaknesses in the quality of recording of incidents and allegations. This means that leaders do not have an accurate picture of the issues.

The site is unsafe. Pupils regularly climb on to the roof. They frequently leave the site. As staff are unable to manage behaviour, situations escalate, so staff and pupils are frequently unsafe. On occasions, the police are called to restore order.

The curriculum does not support pupils to develop the knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe, for example regarding online safety, sex and relationships. Pupils' voice is frequently ignored.

Recruitment procedures are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Systems for gathering, recording and communicating important safeguarding information are not effective. This means that cases are managed poorly and pupils are at risk of not getting the support they need. Leaders need to improve their processes urgently. Staff need to be trained so that they understand the

importance of capturing information accurately and acting appropriately. Leaders, including the IEB, need to analyse the information so that effective action is taken to keep pupils safe.

- The site is not safe. It is in a very poor state of repair. It is not conducive to learning or effective behaviour management. This means that pupils are unsafe and have little pride in their school. Leaders should work with the local authority to make the site safe. They should improve the environment so that it supports effective learning and behaviour.
- There is insufficient clarity about the intent and implementation of the curriculum. This means that pupils do not gain the knowledge and skills they need. Leaders need to design an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum across the school, including the interventions and off-site centres, that meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to succeed.
- Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well. Poor behaviour and attitudes are widespread. Pupils' behaviour regularly disrupts learning. Leaders should establish high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Leaders should support staff in applying these high expectations and help them to manage behaviour more effectively.
- There is no coherent PSHE curriculum or clear provision to ensure that pupils address their social, emotional and mental health needs and are prepared for their adult lives. This means pupils leave the school at risk. Leaders need to design an ambitious and well-sequenced PSHE curriculum across the school, including the off-site centres, that meets the needs of all pupils.
- Leaders' actions have not been successful in providing pupils with an acceptable quality of education. Staff and pupils do not understand what is expected of them. High staff turnover makes this worse. This has led to very low expectations and prevents the school from running effectively on a day-to-day basis. Leaders must take immediate action to reduce staff turnover and ensure that there are clear leadership roles and lines of accountability so that pupils are able to receive a good quality of education.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	113649
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10200939
Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	108
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Jim Barnicott
Headteacher	Alan Buckley
Website	www.mounttamar.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 March 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend this school have an EHC plan. Mount Tamar is a residential special school for pupils with complex needs, including autism spectrum disorders, and severe emotional, social and mental health difficulties. There are currently no children in the early years in the school.
- At the time of the inspection, there were no pupils living in the residence. The local authority is currently consulting to close the residential accommodation.
- The school is based on its main site in Row Lane. Mount Tamar also operates four other sites. Prospect, 114 Beacon Park Road PL2 2PH, Seymour House, Mount Wise Garrison, and Cumberland Road PL1 4JQ offer education to those pupils for whom the main site is not suitable due to the nature of their special educational needs. There is a farm provision at Granary Farm c/o Tencreek Farm, Liskeard PL14 3PS. The Wolseley Centre, Unit 6, Wolseley Close, Plymouth PL2 3BY offers vocational programmes of study.
- The school uses nine alternative providers.
- In March 2021, Ofsted carried out a section 8 inspection. Inspectors identified serious concerns. Safeguarding was not effective.

- In April 2021, an interim executive board was appointed. Many of the members of the board are very new. The chair of the board has recently taken up post.
- There have been several changes in senior leadership, including several interim headteachers. The current headteacher joined the school three weeks before the inspection. It is anticipated he will be with the school until the end of the academic year.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation provided by the school. They met with the headteacher, staff, the interim executive board and groups of pupils. They visited the main sites, Prospect, Seymour and Wolseley.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, PSHE and design and technology. They met with subject leaders, talked to pupils and teachers, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read to adults.
- Inspectors looked at the policies and procedures used to keep pupils safe. They also reviewed the checks carried out by leaders on the suitability of adults who work in the school.
- Inspectors considered 12 responses to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire, and 11 free-text responses. They also considered responses to the student survey and responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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