

Inspection of a good school: Great Torrington School

Calvesford Road, Torrington, Devon EX38 7DJ

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

Great Torrington School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very positive about the wider opportunities they have at Great Torrington School. Many pupils attend extra-curricular clubs and activities. They are proud of the sports programme that is highly inclusive. The school curriculum includes an enrichment lesson. These lessons teach the values of the school. Pupils enjoy opting for a diverse range of enrichment subjects, such as animal care, politics or Latin.

Staff are ambitious for every pupil. Teachers are passionate about their subjects, which motivates pupils. There are good relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils take on positions of responsibility, for example, house captain or a transition leader. The behaviour of most pupils is good. In lessons and around the school, pupils follow the routines and expectations. Pupils are polite and friendly.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school. They learn what bullying is and know how to report concerns. The welfare room provides support for all needs. A few pupils use derogatory language towards others. Leaders are aware that this happens and have put in place a programme of education and support to tackle it. Pupils say that when it is reported, it is promptly dealt with.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious and inclusive curriculum. Pupils regularly revisit what they have learned before and apply that to new learning. For example, in most subjects, pupils begin each lesson by answering questions on topics they learned last year, last month and last week. This helps pupils to remember their learning. Leaders have revised the curriculum for learning languages. As a result, pupils know more and remember more.

Teachers assess pupils' learning to ensure they have understood what they are learning. Teachers use this information to plan the next steps of learning. However, some teachers do not ensure that pupils use their advice about how to improve their knowledge well enough. Consequently, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve.

Leaders ensure that every pupil improves their reading. Every Year 7 pupil follows a reading programme that is suitable for them. Pupils who are not confident in their reading learn phonics. Pupils read together regularly. Leaders are now ambitious to develop the 'reading aloud' programme further. This is so that there is more time to read.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils focus on lessons and learn without disruption. Teachers use the school policies effectively to deal with any low-level poor behaviour. As a result, pupils are learning the curriculum successfully.

Pupils learn a well-structured programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils discuss and explore issues in a way that allows them to think about and ask questions. For example, a Year 10 discussion about gender stereotyping was fully inclusive and many pupils spoke clearly about a range of views. There is a structured careers programme in place from Year 7 to Year 11. Pupils learn about careers and citizenship as a regular lesson within the school timetable. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. They learn confidently and participate well in lessons. Teachers are well informed about pupils' needs. They make sure pupils receive the bespoke support they need. Leaders ensure there is an intervention programme in place for all pupils who have gaps in their learning. As a result, pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills well so that they can learn more in their other subjects.

Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school. They are ambitious to ensure the school is inclusive and that there is a wide range of experiences for every pupil. Leaders ensure that all staff have the training they need for their roles. Most teachers say that leaders take account of staff workload. Staff feel well supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. They are very aware of local and national concerns. Staff receive training on these priorities. Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils receive the support they need. Alternative provision is used effectively to provide appropriate intervention. A welfare room is provided, where pupils can go if they need help.

Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe through their PSHE lessons and assemblies. There are additional lessons and support programmes for pupils who may need more support to understand risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their work. This is because they do not understand how to act on the guidance they receive. Leaders need to ensure that pupils receive feedback in a way that helps them to know what they need to do next.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2012.

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	137228
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10211048
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	804
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Newberry
Headteacher	Andrew Bloodworth
Website	www.gts.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses three registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including policies and records for behaviour management, attendance, safeguarding and pupil alternative provision.

- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the pupil survey and the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rachel Hesketh, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Daniel Mather

Ofsted Inspector

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