

Inspection of Tavistock College

Crowndale Road, Tavistock, Devon PL19 8DD

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The day-to-day life of the school is disrupted by poor behaviour. Leaders aim to provide discipline and support for pupils who struggle with their behaviour. However, their approach has not been effective, and the standard of behaviour has deteriorated.

Many pupils do not feel safe in school. Some are frightened to use parts of the school due to the intimidating and risky behaviour of some groups of pupils. Pupils describe incidents of unruly behaviour. Truancy during lesson time presents an ongoing challenge for staff.

Bullying is widespread. Pupils say teachers do not resolve issues well enough. Many pupils cannot identify an adult they would report a worry to. There are pupils who are subjected to derogatory language based on their individual characteristics. Leaders have failed to create a positive culture in which pupils respect and value one another's differences.

Leaders have designed a curriculum which prepares some pupils well academically for continued study in the sixth form and beyond. However, teachers do not adapt learning well enough to meet the needs of pupils who are likely to struggle. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not learn the curriculum as well as they could.

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

Leaders have identified a need to build relationships between staff and pupils. To help with this, leaders have adapted their approach to behaviour management. However, the new system is not managed well. Too many pupils do not rise to leaders' expectations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have managed a period of acute staff absence. This has reduced their capacity to review and improve their systems for managing behaviour in recent months.

Leaders have not understood the extent to which some pupils are affected by the poor standard of behaviour in the school. Leaders do not have an accurate view of the significant amount of bullying that takes place. They recognise that pupils do not readily report bullying or harassment. Leaders have taken steps to encourage reporting, but it is too soon to see the impact of this.

Through the curriculum, pupils are encouraged to develop respectful relationships and attitudes. There are campaigns to promote equality for protected groups. Despite this, there are pupils who are subjected to derogatory language based on their individual characteristics. Over time, leaders have not done enough to challenge such behaviours and assert a positive environment in which all pupils can thrive.

Leaders have thought carefully about the curriculum they provide in each subject. In most subjects, the curriculum is ambitious. Teachers revisit important ideas. This helps pupils, including students in the sixth form, to build up detailed knowledge over time. However, the curriculum is narrowed to some degree. For example, the subjects some pupils in Year 9 study lack sufficient depth.

Teachers' use of assessment is inconsistent. Where assessment is used well, pupils remember the curriculum and apply their knowledge fluently. Where assessment is used less well, pupils are exposed to examination-style tests before they are ready. Leaders do not use assessment to identify pupils who struggle with reading due to gaps in their phonics knowledge. However, trust leaders have plans to develop the expertise of staff to support pupils who do not read fluently.

There are supportive measures to help pupils with SEND to access their learning. For example, several pupils use laptops to support their writing. Leaders provide teachers with guidance on pupils' needs. However, some teachers do not put this into practice effectively. This makes it difficult for pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum as well as their peers. Many parents of pupils with SEND do not have confidence in the ability of the school to support their children effectively.

Leaders use the curriculum for personal, social and health education to help pupils with issues arising in the local area. This adds to pupils' awareness of different risks. However, leaders have not fully considered how well each element contributes to the personal development of pupils. They have recognised some ways in which the programme needs to be enhanced. For example, leaders plan to give greater priority to teaching about mental health.

Pupils participate in a diverse range of extra-curricular opportunities. Leaders make use of the local landscape by organising adventurous activities. Increasingly, leaders are focused on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make the most of what is on offer. Students in the sixth form play a part in supporting younger pupils, for example as peer mentors.

Students in the sixth form experience a better curriculum than pupils in key stages 3 and 4. They receive constructive, impartial careers advice. They make well-informed decisions about their next steps. Across the school, pupils receive useful guidance when choosing between courses and subjects. 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.

Leaders create focused opportunities to engage with members of the school community. They are beginning to put feedback from parent and staff groups into action. However, initiatives to address poor behaviour and bullying have been implemented too slowly. Leaders do not critically evaluate the impact of new systems. They do not understand the experiences of pupils well enough. As a result, they have not taken the necessary action to ensure pupils feel safe at school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Pupils describe not feeling safe in school. They are intimidated by the unruly and threatening behaviour of some of their peers. Pupils are exposed to risky behaviours and offensive language.

Among pupils, there is a culture in which those with protected characteristics are ridiculed and harassed. Boys pass comments on the appearance of girls, making them feel uncomfortable. There are many accounts of bullying. Pupils do not report incidents because they have not been listened to in the past.

Leaders have a weak understanding of the impact of pupils' experiences and well-being. However, leaders have a better understanding of the challenges that vulnerable pupils and families face at home. They arrange early help for families in need.

Staff are appropriately vetted and receive useful training. They use the school's system for reporting concerns confidently.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have failed to create a culture in which pupils respect one another's differences. For example, the use of derogatory language is commonplace. Leaders must ensure that any intolerance is challenged robustly. They must quickly establish a positive environment in which each pupil is respected for who they are.
- Leaders do not have an accurate view of the standard of behaviour in the school. Although leaders monitor pupils' behaviour, their analysis of trends and patterns is not incisive. As a result, initiatives designed to improve behaviour have been implemented too slowly, or they have not been effective. Leaders must take urgent and effective action to secure a good standard of behaviour across the school.
- Pupils do not have confidence that staff will respond to their reports of poor behaviour or bullying effectively. Consequently, pupils have not reported their concerns and these behaviours have been allowed to spread. Leaders must restore pupils' confidence in the ability of staff to put a stop to bullying and other intimidating behaviours. This will help pupils to feel safe.
- Pupils with SEND do not always receive the support they need to learn the curriculum successfully. Some teachers do not adapt learning in light of pupils' needs. There is a lack of confidence among parents in the school's provision for pupils with SEND. Leaders should work with teachers and parents to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the effective support they need.

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	145336
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10227683
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,379
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	193
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tania Skeaping
Principal	Tristan Muller-Forster
Website	www.tavistockcollege.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Tavistock College converted to become an academy school in February 2018. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Tavistock College is a larger-than-average-size secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans are above average.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school is part of the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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 held discussions with the principal, members of the senior team, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of trustees, including the chair of the trust and the chair of the local stakeholder board, the chief executive officer and other leaders from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also met with groups of teachers and support staff and visited lessons in some other subjects.
- To evaluate safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and a representative from the trust. Inspectors also considered a range of documentary evidence and talked with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered responses to the survey for pupils and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
James Oldham	Her Majesty's Inspector
Non Davies	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Favager-Dalton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Hesketh	Her Majesty's Inspector

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