

# Inspection of ACE Tiverton Special School

Orchard Way, Tiverton, Devon EX16 5HB

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Hannah Smart. This school is part of Transforming Futures Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Matt Sambrook, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clive Grace OBE.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The welfare and education of pupils are at the heart of ACE Tiverton Special School. Pupils are warmly welcomed. This allows them to settle into school life. Pupils receive the care and support they need to help them overcome the significant challenges they face. This means that many pupils quickly gain the confidence and self-esteem they need to achieve success.

The school has high expectations for how pupils conduct themselves in class and during social times. Pupils know what is expected of them and strive to do their best. They understand the consequences of poor behaviour.

Overall, pupils enjoy school and are keen to experience success in their learning. However, the school recognises that there is more work to do to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they can. For example, pupils sometimes struggle to link their learning across the subjects they study. This can slow the progress they make.

The school offers significant pastoral support to pupils and their families. There is a nurturing environment for pupils to re-engage with their education. Pupils appreciate the warm relationships they build with staff. They know who to share any worries or concerns with. This helps them to feel safe.

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

Pupils arrive with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils have complex needs. When they start, the school checks what pupils know and can do. In addition, staff carefully consider the information in pupils' education, health and care plans to ensure that the correct provision is in place to meet their learning, social and emotional needs.

School leaders are ambitious for the school. They have accurately identified the improvements required. Also, the school knows that assessment is not fully developed. Consequently, some pupils have a patchy understanding in some areas. There are plans in place to rectify this, but these are in the early stages of development.

As the school evolves, work continues to ensure the curriculum is well planned and sequenced to meet pupils' needs. The school wants pupils to gain the knowledge and skills to use when they leave for college, training or employment. The school has high aspirations that pupils will achieve well. There is a strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils achieve success in a range of qualifications, including GCSEs in English, mathematics and science.

The school ensures the environment is well resourced and looked after. Pupils benefit from great amenities, including a design and technology room, gym and science laboratory. These help pupils to have the same learning experiences as their peers in mainstream schools.

The school has a clear focus on preparing pupils for adulthood. Pupils' personal development is carefully considered. They have the opportunity to explore and understand the wider world in which they live. They experience a wide range of activities beyond the school, such as residential trips to London and Kilve Court. Pupils can work towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Award. These and other activities help build confidence, develop organisational skills and increase independence. As a result, pupils leave the school well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils receive impartial careers guidance. They are looking forward to their forthcoming work-related learning, which includes working in a bakery, the civil service or retail. This helps them prepare for jobs and college applications when they leave school.

The school works with parents to promote good attendance. Where required, support and guidance are given. As a result, pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Parents have mixed views about the school. For example, some parents are unhappy with communication. However, other parents have confidence in the school and feel their children are thriving.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The school has an ambitious curriculum. However, some pupils are not able to make links between their learning across the subjects they study. This can hinder the depth of their learning. The school must ensure that all components are consistently in place so that pupils are able to connect their knowledge more securely.
- The school has not established rigorous systems to assess how well pupils remember the knowledge they have been taught. As a result, pupils' recall of prior learning can be insecure. The school needs to ensure assessment is used effectively to check what pupils know and remember across all subjects.

## **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.

## Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147064
<b>Local authority</b>	Devon
<b>Inspection number</b>	10298071
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Clive Grace OBE
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Matt Sambrook
<b>Headteacher</b>	Hannah Smart
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.atss.acemat.uk">www.atss.acemat.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- ACE Tiverton is a specialist secondary school, educating pupils with autism and linked social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school opened in September 2019.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other senior

leaders and staff.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with members of both the governing body and the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The lead inspector sampled work and spoke to leaders in art and design, physical education, science and history.
- The lead inspector spoke with the special educational needs service manager from Devon local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered key documentation, including school development plans and governors' and trustees' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The inspectors met with school leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies.

### **Inspection team**

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Heather Barraclough

His Majesty's Inspector

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