

Inspection of Torlands Academy

Merrivale Road, St Thomas, Exeter EX4 1PT

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The principal of this school is Frances Harland. This school is part of Wave 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, Robert Gasson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Justin Day. Helen Casson is the executive principal and oversees the work of the school. She is also the director of education of Wave Multi Academy Trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a highly inclusive school. Pupils have complex medical needs. Committed staff provide excellent pastoral support. Pupils and staff forge highly respectful relationships as a result. Staff ensure that pupils re-engage in academic learning swiftly after having extended periods of absence at their mainstream schools. Pupils make remarkable improvements to their attendance.

Pupils receive a good education. The curriculum is suitably broad. A range of curriculum pathways prepares pupils well for their next stage of education. Pupils behave superbly in lessons and engage fully in school life. Pupils rebuild their resilience to learn exceptionally well. Many thrive academically.

The school's nurturing approach is exceptionally successful in developing pupils' character. Staff value pupils' every achievement. Well-thought-out activities, what the school calls 'Torland tasters', enrich pupils' learning brilliantly. Clubs extend to pupils who learn online, for instance 'pet-pals'. Pupils learn to be part of a team through a range of outdoor activities including 'beach cleaning' days.

The school makes a positive difference to pupils' lives. Every parent or carer who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school. Typical responses include 'my child is flourishing', 'excellent communication and care' and 'amazing school'.

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

The school is well led. Leaders and staff work together effectively. They put pupils at the centre of any decision-making. For example, staff facilitate pupils' transition into school life very successfully. Leaders build on this by increasing pupils' curriculum time and subject content incrementally. This means that pupils learn through a broad range of subjects as soon as they are ready.

Leaders work closely with medical professionals, the local authority, parents and carers and the referring schools. This ensures that, typically, pupils' placements at Torlands are highly productive. When pupils are ready to reintegrate back into mainstream school or go on to specialist or post-16 placements, staff plan for this goal meticulously.

Across the school, the curriculum sets out clearly what pupils need to know and remember. Typically, pupils in key stage 4 study for a minimum of five GCSEs. This always includes English, mathematics and science. A growing range of other subjects are on offer such as art, statistics, further mathematics, history, geography and psychology.

Staff use their good subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum well. Many staff are experts in the subjects they teach. Leaders ensure that staff subject teams meet regularly to agree the content of sequences of work and consistent teaching

approaches. This ensures that staff who work on site, online, or in pupils' homes implement subject curriculums effectively. As a result, pupils learn and remember the knowledge set out in the curriculum well.

Reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. The school ensures that pupils who need support to decode words using phonics soon develop greater accuracy and fluency in their reading over time.

Staff ensure that teaching is effective in meeting pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities over time. However, there are occasions, within some sequences of work, when teaching does not break down into manageable pieces the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn next. This slows a minority of pupils' learning down.

The systems for monitoring pupils' attendance are robust. Pupils' attendance increases substantially over time. Pupils become highly motivated to learn. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum is effective. Staff adapt subject content to ensure that pupils deepen their understanding of how to deal with risks. For example, pupils receive in-depth teaching about child-on-child abuse, online safety, consent and discrimination. There is an in-depth careers package including regular careers workshops and impartial advice.

Trustees make strategic decisions well to further improve the school's education offer. For example, a recent evaluation resulted in a new science laboratory. The governance hub has a strong skillset. Trustees and hub members identify that increasing the scope of physical education even further is a top priority. However, this work is at an early stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, parts of sequences of work do not meet pupils' needs consistently well. This is because teaching is not broken down well enough, or it is not based on precise knowledge of what pupils need to learn next. This slows a minority of pupils' learning down. The trust must ensure that teaching across all classes, subjects and sequences of work enables pupils to master the curriculum content so that all pupils achieve highly.

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

Unique reference number	147362
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10298085
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	139
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Justin Day
CEO of trust	Robert Gasson
Principal	Frances Harland
Website	www.wavemat.org/our-academies/torlands-academy-exeter
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Torlands Academy opened in September 2019. It is part of Wave Multi Academy Trust, which comprises nine regional alternative provision academies, two medical academies in Devon and Cornwall and a special academy in Devon for pupils with social communication and interaction needs.
- Torlands Academy is a medical provision academy. Pupils are referred by their registered mainstream school and relevant medical professionals. Places are commissioned by Devon County Council, under Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to provide education for pupils aged 5 to 16 who 'by reason of illness, or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them' from across Devon, but excluding Plymouth and Torbay.
- Pupils are dual registered with their referring schools. Pupils can attend Torlands Academy five days per week. Pupils either attend from 9.00am until 2.00pm, or 2.15pm until 4.30pm. Online lessons take place from 9.00am until 4.30pm. Some staff also provide teaching in pupils' homes or at pupils' referring schools.

- The school has a pupil admission number of 106. It is oversubscribed. It does not have capacity for 106 pupils to learn on site. Typically, approximately 35 pupils attend on site at any one time. There are five classrooms, including a science laboratory and art room. There is a large multipurpose common room. Currently, outside space is limited. Pupils access a forest space for supervised outdoor adventurous activities.
- At the time of this inspection, there were no key stage 1 pupils. The large majority of pupils are aged between 14 and 16. The school's aim is for pupils to reintegrate back to the referring school as soon as they are able, or to transition into mainstream school or post-16 college placements. The average length of time that pupils attend this school is just over three months for pupils in key stage 3 and approximately six months at key stage 4.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 school's first graded inspection.
- 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 principal, executive principal and other school staff to discuss aspects of the school's work. An inspector also met with two trustees, the chief executive officer and members of the governor hub, including representatives from referring schools. An inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of Devon local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English (including reading), mathematics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector also examined the scope of the science and PSHE curriculums by looking at curriculum plans, visiting lessons, reviewing pupils' work and speaking to leaders.
- An inspector listened to pupils from key stages 3 and 4 read to an adult.
- 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 responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mike Thomas

Ofsted Inspector

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