

Inspection of Paignton Academy

Waterleat Road, Paignton, Devon TQ3 3WA

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 December 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of this school is Derwyn Williams. This school is part of Thinking Schools 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 (CEO), Stuart Gardner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Paignton Academy learn on one of two sites for their journey through school. Leaders create a strong feeling of community, despite being physically separated. Pupils make use of sporting facilities on both sites, take part in shared school productions and attend trips and visits together.

Pupils have mixed views on their enjoyment of school. Although the school, with the support of the trust, has established high expectations of pupils, weaknesses remain in the quality of education that the school provides. The published data shows that, typically, pupils' attainment is below the national average.

Most pupils show positive attitudes towards their learning in lessons. If low-level disruption occurs, staff apply the behaviour policy well. However, there is more work to be done to improve how pupils treat each other outside of lessons. Some pupils use derogatory language or show unkind behaviour towards their peers. This is not consistently challenged by staff. Despite this, most pupils say they feel safe in school.

Pupils benefit from a range of enrichment opportunities. An increasing number of pupils take part in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, developing their experience of outdoor adventure. Pupils enjoy taking on leadership responsibilities such as being sports leaders, mental health ambassadors or translators supporting pupils who speak English as an additional language.

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

The school has redesigned its curriculum to be broad and ambitious. The knowledge pupils will learn is organised in a logical order. This allows pupils to develop a deeper understanding over time. The impact of these improvements is evident in key stage 3, where pupils demonstrate they know and remember more of what they have been taught. Older pupils still have some significant gaps in their learning.

Staff participate in an extensive professional development and coaching programme. They are becoming more confident in using the trust's chosen teaching approaches. Where practice is strongest, pupils benefit from clear instruction and careful checking of their understanding. However, this is inconsistent so hinders how well some pupils learn the curriculum.

Since the previous inspection, the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has improved. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, and appropriate support is put in place. Teachers have a growing understanding of how to adapt their teaching successfully for the benefit of these pupils. The school ensures that pupils with SEND are included in the wider life of the school. For example, they take part in school productions and attend sports clubs. The school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) is now central to the Borough Road

site. Pupils feel part of the school community and are accessing their education more regularly.

The school identifies pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read. However, the programme of support for these pupils is in its infancy. The school has prioritised addressing this. In addition, it knows that there is more to be done to establish a culture of reading for pleasure.

Pupils' behaviour has improved. Lessons are calm and purposeful. The 'speak up, speak out' campaign has led to more pupils feeling confident to report concerns. However, a minority of pupils do not conduct themselves well outside of the classroom.

In the main, pupils who attend school frequently are beginning to benefit from the improvements that are being made to the school. However, too many pupils miss a significant amount of learning time due to being absent from school. This includes absence due to suspension. Disadvantaged pupils, and those that join the school at different times of the year, make up a high number of these absences.

The personal development programme is a strength of the school. Pupils learn about important issues such as maintaining healthy relationships, keeping safe online and in the community, and managing emotions such as grief. Careers education is an important part of the school's offer. Pupils are well informed about their potential next steps. They benefit from careers advice and visits from local colleges and employers.

Most staff support the leadership of the school. They are positive about the trust-led improvements. However, a minority raise concerns about the amount of change and the impact on their workload. Until recently, the pace of school improvement has been slow. The trust and the school have begun to evaluate the impact of new initiatives. However, their oversight of some areas remains less secure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not use the school's agreed learning strategies effectively. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they should and are not as positive about their learning in these subjects. The trust should ensure that staff are supported to implement the curriculum successfully.
- Some pupils show disrespectful behaviours and use derogatory language around the school site. This means that other pupils can experience a negative and uncomfortable

atmosphere at social times. The trust should work with leaders and staff to ensure that pupils are taught to contribute to, and value, a positive and respectful school culture.

- Some pupils do not attend school frequently enough, particularly disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, a significant number of pupils do not learn the full curriculum and are therefore not well prepared for their next steps. The trust should embed the approaches that are starting to show some success so that pupils' attendance improves rapidly.
- Until recently, the school has not had a clear enough oversight of the impact of initiatives. As a result, the speed of school improvement has been too slow. The trust should ensure that recent improvements are embedded and that they continue to drive the improvement of the school.

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	138863
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	10344648
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	1,601
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerard Newman
CEO of the trust	Stuart Gardner
Principal	Derwyn Williams
Website	www.paigntonacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 July 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Thinking Schools Academy Trust. It joined the trust on the 1 September 2023 after transferring from the Bay Education Trust.
- The school is based at two sites. Both sites accommodate pupils from Year 7 to Year 11. The address of the second site is: Borough Road, Paignton, TQ4 7DH. The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils who have emotionally based school avoidance. Currently, 12 pupils attend this provision.
- The school uses two registered and nine unregistered providers of alternative provision.
- 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. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, other members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the chair and vice chair of the local academy governance board, the chair of the trust alongside other trustees, the regional director of education for the trust and the CEO of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, science, physical education and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- 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 Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Kelly Olive, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Kathy Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Nadine Lapskas	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Smith	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Hannon	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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