

Tiverton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113548
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	311312
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Robinson
Headteacher	Andrew Lovett
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Bolham Road Tiverton EX16 6SQ
Telephone number	01884 256655
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Tiverton High School is a larger than average school serving a large and socially diverse area in and around the town of Tiverton. There is evidence of disadvantage and low aspirations in the community. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average. Very few of the students come from minority ethnic groups and only a very small number speak English as an additional language. Since 2003, the school has had specialist status for the visual arts. The school shares its site with the local further education college with which it has well established curriculum links. The school has gained Investor in People, Investor in Careers and Investor in Education Business Partnership status, together with the Artsmark silver and Sportsmark awards. The school is the centre for a project providing multi-agency support for vulnerable young people and their families.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Tiverton High School provides a good standard of education. Parents and students speak positively about the work of the school and particularly the developments that have been introduced since the headteacher took up his post. In a typical example of parental views, one parent wrote, 'There is every opportunity for a pupil to develop healthily in every way at THS. The resources and premises are good and the teachers are always approachable and professional. My daughter enjoys her school days and is already looking forward to the options she has chosen.' The quality of the school's work with outside agencies to support the welfare of students and their families is outstanding.

The headteacher has created a strong leadership team with a very clear focus on raising standards and achievement. Governors support this endeavour well. The commitment to continuous improvement is supported by good structures for line management and monitoring. As a result, the school's development planning is based on secure self-evaluation, which demonstrates good capacity to improve the school further. The value placed on all members of staff has created excellent teamwork and collaboration and because of this, the school has a real sense of working as a community. Good practice is shared but the school recognises that a planned approach to sharing expertise and innovation would benefit more staff.

Standards are improving and achievement is good. Test and examination results have been rising over the last few years, particularly in GCSE examinations, but staff are aware that there is still further improvement that can and should be made. The good progress that students make from their below-average starting points when they enter the school is the result of effective teaching and learning. This focused approach is clear in the work that the school is successfully undertaking to raise literacy levels and, in particular, writing. Good use of assessment data to identify areas for improvement, together with teaching that supports step-by-step learning of writing skills, is improving standards and progress. However, weaker writing skills still hamper learning across the curriculum and preparation for the world of work.

The school's effective care, guidance and support provide well for students' personal development and well-being, which are good overall. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of opportunities offered to them. In the parental questionnaire responses, a small minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, but inspectors found this to be satisfactory in lessons and around the school. Students are polite and thoughtful, and relationships are good. They clearly feel safe in school and understand their rights and responsibilities in an environment that is fair and supportive. The school has recently improved attendance, which is now satisfactory. A good and developing curriculum provides well for students' needs, with effective links with local further education colleges. The visual arts, as the school's specialism, provide stimulating learning opportunities across the curriculum. Outreach work with museums, theatres and businesses has widened experiences for students. Students also benefit from opportunities to take part in a wealth of enrichment activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise overall standards by the end of Key Stage 4 to at least the national average.
- Improve writing skills further to support learning in all subjects.
- Provide planned opportunities for teachers to share their good ideas and successful teaching approaches.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The national test results in Year 9 in 2007 were slightly below average in English and science but in mathematics were in line with the national figure. Over the last three years, standards have improved because of focused teaching and the effective tracking of achievement. However, writing skills are low when the students join the school, which hinders their achievement. From their starting points, students make good progress overall from Year 7 to Year 9. Progress is greatest in mathematics and has been weaker in English. However, evidence of progress in lessons and the school's assessment information indicate that the results in English are well on track for further improvement, particularly at the higher levels.

The 2007 results show the percentage of students gaining five or more grade A* to C in the GCSE examinations has increased by 13% since 2005. The figure for five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics has increased by 14% in the same period. This represents good improvement, albeit from a low base, over that time. However, standards at the end of Year 11 remain below the national average, although current work and school data indicate the school is on target for further improvement. The school gains significantly above-average results in art and design at the higher grades in GCSE examinations, reflecting the focus given to its specialist status. In relation to students' attainment when they enter the school, the latest school data show that their overall rate of progress is good. This is reinforced by the clear progress made by students in lessons across the curriculum. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Relationships are of a high quality throughout the school and students appreciate and respond to the needs of others. They show a good awareness of other cultures which is developed through their lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular activities. Students clearly enjoy school and are proud of what they and the school have achieved. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle and students make informed choices about their well-being.

Students report that they feel safe in school and know what to do and who to approach when they need help. They say that any bullying is dealt with effectively. The effective peer mentoring and welfare systems are appreciated by students.

Many of the wide range of extra-curricular activities available enable the students to make an active contribution to the local community and to the wider world. Students are encouraged to take a part in shaping the future of the school and have been involved in deciding the code of behaviour and the new school uniform.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. There are examples of excellent practice in a range of subjects, where very effective teaching inspires students to make very good progress and attain higher levels. Technology is used well in many classrooms to enhance learning. In lessons, technicians

and other support staff are employed successfully in furthering the students' progress. In most lessons, well-paced activities, which are carefully planned, engage and interest students. Clear explanations and good relationships, together with effective questioning, promote independent learning. The supportive relationships established mean that work is discussed in a constructive and supportive manner, which enhances students' understanding. This focused and supportive environment leads to the good progress observed in most lessons. In a small minority of lessons, the slower pace meant some students did not make the progress that was expected of them. In a few lessons, low-level disruption was seen but was dealt with satisfactorily by teachers. The quality of marking is inconsistent in a few classes and this hinders students' understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has worked hard to provide a flexible curriculum that meets the needs of the students aged 14 to 16 and this is a strength. There are courses at entry level through to AS level in, for example, art and critical thinking. Careful timetabling allows students to pursue particular interests in depth, especially in aspects of art and design, reflecting the school's specialist status in the visual arts. Links with an agricultural college and the strong partnership with the local further education college, including some common timetabling, have extended the range of vocational courses on offer. Students and parents greatly appreciate this choice. Strong work-related learning and careers education ensure good progression at age 16.

The school has started to review the curriculum for younger students and is planning to develop personal learning and thinking skills throughout the curriculum and through focus days from next September. There are good links with primary schools through, for example, common projects in music, where provision is outstanding, art and 'young cultural creators' focusing on students' writing.

The school provides a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, and the visual and performing arts. Students have a say in what is offered and value these opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff display a high level of commitment in ensuring the promotion of students' safety, welfare and health. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust, reviewed regularly and all staff receive training on child protection matters. Key personnel receive additional training.

The school has a comprehensive system for tracking and monitoring students' attainment and progress, which is discussed with individual students and regularly reported to parents and carers. The system includes specific support for students with particular gifts and talents. Challenging targets are set for all students. Key Stage 4 students said they knew their subject target grades and how to improve them but a minority of Key Stage 3 students felt less sure about their target levels as their targets are not communicated to them clearly enough. Students making insufficient progress are identified early and are given targeted support.

The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. The quality of the school's work with outside agencies is outstanding. Students with specific needs are fully engaged and make good progress, which equips them for life beyond school. In particular, the multi-agency AXS project based at the school provides excellent

integrated care and support for vulnerable students and their families. The off-site facility at Westend provides a safe and secure environment where students develop confidence and learn life skills, as well as obtaining qualifications.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

This is an inclusive school. The headteacher has communicated a clear vision, shared by all staff, that values every student and focuses on raising achievement and standards. His strong leadership is complemented by an equally strong senior leadership team. They work cohesively to secure quality in all aspects of the school's work. The role of middle managers is now more clearly defined and they play an important part in driving forward school improvement. Curricular innovations such as the introduction of AS levels and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) vocational courses are good examples of how they have been consulted. Regular strategy meetings and support for professional development show how this group is valued and encouraged. Leaders have ensured that staff have a good understanding of how assessment for learning can be used to plan teaching and learning, set targets and track achievement. However, it is acknowledged that more can be done to share expertise and innovation.

The governing body is effective, providing a good balance of support and challenge for the school. The chair of governors knows the school well and the chairs of committees are proactive. For example, the chair of finance has worked hard to develop further the arrangements for monitoring the school budget.

The impact of its specialist status for the visual arts has been good and given the school a distinctive role within the region. Strong links with partner schools have been established by providing a varied programme of arts-based activities for students and families. It is evident that transition into Year 7 has been made easier by this early involvement. A focus on raising the profile of visual learning in lessons has been very successful, with new technology being used to enhance teaching across the curriculum.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Tiverton High School, Tiverton, EX16 6SQ

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to the student guides who helped the inspectors find their way around. We enjoyed talking with all the students we met and found what you had to say very informative and relevant. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

Our judgement is that Tiverton High School is a good school. You work hard and make good progress in school.

These are some of the more positive aspects that we found:

- The improvements made in the standards you reach
- The good progress in your learning that you make in lessons
- The good quality of the teaching in your lessons
- The positive relationships that you have with other students and staff
- Your clear enjoyment of the opportunities that you have in the curriculum and particularly in the visual arts
- The good care, guidance and support you receive from all staff to help you in your work and personal lives; the support that you and your families receive through the AXS project is outstanding
- The good quality of the leadership of your headteacher, senior and middle managers, and governors.

Your headteacher and staff are working hard to make further improvements to the school. To aid this process, we have asked them to do the following three things:

- Raise overall standards by the end of Key Stage 4 to at least the national average
- Improve writing skills further to support learning in all subjects
- Provide planned opportunities for teachers to share their good ideas and successful teaching approaches.

You have an important part to play in this by continuing to work hard and making the most of the wide range of opportunities you have at Tiverton High School. We are sure that you will do so and we wish you well for the future.

Robert Pyner Her Majesty's Inspector

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