

Inspection of a good school: Torquay Academy

Cricketfield Road, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7NU

Inspection dates:

26–27 February 2020

Outcome

Torquay Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Torquay Academy. The school has high ambitions for pupils, who say they feel inspired to do their best.

Pupils and staff say that every second counts. Pupils are prompt to lessons and waste no time before starting their learning. Behaviour is good, and learning is rarely disrupted.

Leaders have developed a whole-school approach to teaching that is helping pupils to learn more. Pupils talk confidently about their work and how they can apply the knowledge they have learned.

Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other and their differences. Bullying is rare. If it occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils trust staff and say they know they will help them to resolve problems. One pupil reflected the views of many when he said: 'the school is strict but kind'.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests and talents. Pupils attend the school's sports academies and many other activities. Pupils have had national success as young engineers. The school is proud of those who designed and constructed an electric car. Staff regularly acknowledge pupils' efforts, and pupils wear their award badges with pride.

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

The principal has an ambitious vision for the school. Leaders share his high expectations. This is reflected in staff comments to inspectors that 'there is a high floor and no ceiling' for pupils' achievements.

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to know. The curriculum is well planned, so that pupils build and review their knowledge through quarterly learning cycles. Students in the sixth form follow a similarly well-structured curriculum. Pupils

systematically revisit previous learning. This is helping them to know and remember more.

Teaching in the subject areas such as English, music and science helps pupils to make connections between what they already know and can do, and what comes next. Pupils can confidently tackle more complex work. However, in some foundation subjects, such as geography and languages, the curriculum is not as coherent. Curriculum leaders have not considered well enough what pupils need to know and learn. Pupils have a less secure foundation to take next steps in their learning.

Teachers expect pupils to produce high-quality work. Pupils use complex vocabulary in their writing and do this well in subjects such as English and science. Pupils take pride in their work. Students' work in the sixth form shows high levels of engagement in their studies. Sixth-form students are confident and articulate when explaining their work.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The co-ordinator for SEND provides appropriate guidance for teachers to support pupils in their learning. Teachers know their pupils well and adapt the curriculum appropriately.

Although many pupils continue with a humanities subject after key stage 3, a much lower proportion study a language. To address this, leaders have restructured the curriculum, offering a new language that more pupils are keen to study for longer.

Leaders have created a culture where treating one another respectfully is the norm. Pupils look after the school environment. They understand and appreciate the reasons behind the school's rules. They listen to one another in lessons and follow instructions carefully.

The school develops pupils beyond their academic studies. It provides an array of opportunities, including a strong range of performing arts, sports clubs and academies, outdoor adventure and leadership roles. Pupils learn about positive physical and mental well-being. Topics such as healthy relationships, road and water safety, along with learning about different values and beliefs in society are developing well-rounded young people.

Students in the sixth form value the guidance their teachers and tutors give them, especially when making plans for life after school. However, younger pupils would welcome more information about careers from an earlier age.

An overwhelmingly majority of staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders have done much to ensure that staff workload is manageable. Staff appreciate this. Teachers said the way the curriculum is planned centrally has helped them to use their time well to focus on their teaching. Governors meet and visit the school regularly and they support and challenge leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school teaches pupils about risks. Pupils know they can talk about concerns with staff. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe.

Staff know how to identify a pupil who may be at risk. They make good use of the school's safeguarding systems.

Safeguarding leaders are vigilant and act in a timely manner. They help pupils and their families to get extra help when they need it. The safeguarding team is well aware of local risks. They work well with external organisations and the local community to keep pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, curriculum leaders have a weaker grasp of what makes a strong curriculum. They have not considered the content of their curriculum well enough. Pupils do not always learn content that will help them make progress to the curriculum goals. Leaders should consider carefully how and when pupils will acquire the important knowledge that they need. This will help leaders to construct a subject curriculum that is fully in line with the school's ambitions.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	138370
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	10122376
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1373
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Vince Flower
Principal	Steve Margetts
Website	http://www.tqacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 June 2016

Information about this school

- Torquay Academy is a sponsor-led academy. The sponsor is Torquay Boys' Grammar School.
- The school uses alternative provision at the Medical Tuition Service.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the chair of governors and representatives from the governing board, including trust representatives. We also met with the principal, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs co-ordinator. We held a telephone conversation with an alternative provider.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English, geography, languages, music and science. We visited lessons, met with staff, looked at pupils' work, talked with pupils, interviewed curriculum leaders and examined documentation.
- We met with the designated safeguarding lead. We talked with a range of staff about safeguarding training. We examined documentation and school records.
- We spoke with pupils to discuss their views about the school. We considered 95 responses to the staff survey and 126 responses to Ofsted's online survey Parent View.

Inspection team

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