

Torquay Academy

Cricketfield Road, Torquay, TQ2 7NU

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too many students do not make good enough progress in mathematics from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 11. The achievement of some students in science and modern languages is not as good as it should be.
- In some cases, students' work is not checked for completeness and accuracy.
- Some work is not clearly marked so that students do not know how to improve.
- Tasks do not always stretch students to allow them to fulfil their true potential.
- A minority of students show a lack of respect for adults. Misbehaviour in classrooms is not always dealt with effectively. This sometimes results in behaviour that slows the students' own progress and that of other students.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Some students do not make enough progress, usually because of difficulties with reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- There have been improvements in the proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics. The most able students achieve well.
- Students' literacy skills and their achievement in English are improving, often from very low starting points. This is because work to improve their reading and writing is increasingly effective.
- The principal, senior leaders and trustees and governors recognise the academy's strengths and areas for development. They are taking very effective action to bring about improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 34 lessons. About one third of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Tutorial sessions and an assembly were also observed. Students' work was scrutinised, including that produced by Years 11 and 12 who were taking public examinations at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment, progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the multi-academy trust and the local governing body.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including 69 parents and carers who completed the Ofsted online Parent View.
- The views of 66 staff who completed a questionnaire were analysed and taken into account.

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It is one of several serving the coastal town of Torquay and surrounding area.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs and are supported through school action is high. It is nearly four times the national average. The proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is above average. Most of these students have moderate learning or behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals. About one third of the pupils in Year 7 also attract additional funding known as Year 7 catch-up funding.
- The proportion of students who join or leave the academy other than at the usual ages is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 study courses at South Devon College. The school does not use any other alternative provision.
- The academy was formerly named Torquay Community College. In September 2012 it became an academy, sponsored by Torquay Boys' Grammar School, through a multi-academy trust. A board of trustees oversees the work of both schools. Much of the day-to-day supervision of the work of the academy is delegated to a local governing body.
- When Torquay Community College was last inspected by Ofsted in December 2010 it was found to be good.
- The sixth form was established in September 2013; therefore, as yet, no students are in Year 13.
- During the inspection most students in Years 11 and 12 were taking public examinations, so their achievement was assessed mainly through scrutiny of their work.
- The principal took up his post in January 2014. Many senior and middle leaders have been appointed since September 2013 and further appointments have been made for September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and hence students' progress, especially in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, by ensuring that:
 - students' work, including routine note making, is checked for completeness and accuracy
 - teachers' comments on work show the student how to improve it, including by helping them to write with accuracy and to use mathematics effectively
 - tasks always stretch students to allow them to fulfil their true potential.
- Improve the behaviour in classrooms for those students for whom it is needed by:
 - adults consistently and quickly applying the academy's policies to deal with misbehaviour in the classroom
 - ensuring that students understand the importance of using class time effectively and are aware of the impact of misbehaviour on the learning of others.
- Improve the achievement of students in the sixth form by ensuring that past weaknesses in their skills of reading, writing and using mathematics are rectified.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The proportions of students making good or better progress from Year 7 to Year 11 are below average in mathematics.
- Students' achievement in science and in modern foreign languages is not as good as it should be. For example, in 2013, only a fifth of Year 11 students attained grade C or better in GCSE Spanish; in French none attained these grades. The proportions of students entered for GCSE in these subjects is low.
- Previously, in science GCSE, too few students attained more than one GCSE pass. The picture is improving as more students are encouraged to take an extended course.
- The progress of some sixth form students is held back because of their weak skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Early entry for GCSE mathematics has been discontinued.
- Over the last three years there has been an improvement in the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. In previous years this was only obtained by about 35% of students; however, in 2013, 50% of Year 11 achieved this standard.
- Achievement in English is improving. In the 2013 GCSE examinations, more able students achieved well. The work of current students shows that in 2014 most of those with average, and some with lower, starting points will attain at least grade C. Reading and writing skills are developing more rapidly than in the past, in part due to effective use of additional funding.
- Students are encouraged to read widely. Laptop computers are often used to carry out research on the internet. For example, in Year 10 health and social care, students researched the care and safety requirements when planning an outing for a disabled young person. This work was a good example of the academy's successful promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Gaps are closing between the achievement of students attracting additional funding and that of other students. For example, in GCSE in 2013, the attainment of this group was on average one grade lower in mathematics and half of a grade lower in English. Evidence shows that, for the current Year 11, gaps are closing between eligible students and their peers, with almost no differences in English and only half a grade behind in mathematics. This shows that the academy's use of the additional funding is effective.
- The good quality support given to students who are looked after is particularly effective in enabling them to achieve well. Many of these students have had previous experiences of school that have not been positive. The many students who start at the academy after the start of Year 7 also achieve well. These factors reflect the academy's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- In general, the progress of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs equals that of other students. However, for some individuals, progress is slower.
- Some students in Years 10 and 11 pursue studies at South Devon College. The academy's checks show that they make good progress on these courses.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all students achieve as well as they could.
- Students' work in some subjects is not checked routinely enough by teachers. This results in students having incomplete or inaccurate work in their books. It also hinders their opportunities to improve in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The marking of work is variable in quality. Marking does not always make clear to students how their work could be improved.
- On occasion the tasks which students are asked to tackle do not stretch them and are too easy to allow them to fulfil their true potential.

- Teachers have an increasing understanding of how assessment may be used to check progress and plan future work. They are beginning to use this to check the progress of students, such as those who are eligible for additional funding. As a result, these students are less likely to fall behind than was the case in the past.
- Students are well aware of the challenging targets that have been set for them and now know the progress they are making towards achieving them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. A minority of students sometimes show a lack of respect towards teachers and other adults. Examples observed included inappropriate calling out or interrupting the teacher, gossiping with classmates when there was work to be done, using mobile phones in the classroom to send text messages and refusal to retrieve physical education equipment when asked. Students are also sometimes slow to settle when asked by the teacher to do so. These factors slow the progress of both the wrongdoers and of other students.
- Staff report an improvement in behaviour since new policies were introduced, but acknowledge that the response of teachers in the past was not always consistent. Evidence from the school's records confirms that behaviour is improving over time.
- Students, parents and staff agree that there is little bullying and that any which occurs is dealt with effectively. The school's records confirm this. Students have a good understanding of the dangers of bullying, for example through the misuse of electronic media.
- Students report that other students are tolerant of different forms of sexual orientation. Sometimes remarks are overheard that might be interpreted as racist. These are not directed at other students and are dealt with effectively by staff, showing that the academy promotes tolerance and understanding.
- Students take good care of the modern buildings and equipment. There is an absence of litter, including chewing gum residue. Students welcome the new academy uniform. They like to look smart and are proud to wear it.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and parents agree. Arrangements to keep students safe meet all requirements and there are effective arrangements for child protection.
- Attendance has improved and is now around the national average. Students are punctual, both at the start of the day and to lessons. Good attendance is helped by the fact that the academy provides breakfast, free of charge, to any student who wishes it.
- The attendance and welfare of students attending South Devon College are checked by the academy. No cause for concern has been identified.

The leadership and management

are good

- The recently-appointed principal and his senior leadership team, many of whom are new to the school, are highly effective and have made a very good start on bringing about improvements. They share with trustees and governors a clear vision of future success in which high achievement and good teaching can flourish. They are developing realistic plans to bring this about.
- Senior leaders inherited an analysis of the academy's strengths and weaknesses which was less than accurate, especially in respect of the quality of teaching. Some staff and governors had an unrealistically optimistic view of performance. A much more accurate picture is now emerging and appropriate action is being taken to bring about improvement. There are now more rigorous links between teachers' pay and the progress of students, and any underperforming teachers are given additional support. New appointments have been made to ensure that specialists are available to teach all subjects.

- Senior leaders recognised that the teaching of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics needed to improve. A successful start has been made on improving reading and writing and this is leading to better progress, especially for younger students. There is still some underachievement among older students, including in the sixth form, which has yet to be rectified completely.
- Data concerning students' achievement are being used with increasing effectiveness. Analysis of progress and of the performance of students, such as those attracting additional funding, is now much more accurate.
- Leaders are working hard to develop strategies to improve mathematical skills and determine the priorities for the sixth form. The aim is to create a culture where good teaching and good behaviour can flourish.
- Rapid improvement is being brought about for those students who start Year 7 with attainment which is well below average.
- The range of subjects taught has undergone many changes in the recent past. For example, the introduction of separate science subjects at GCSE shows senior leaders' determination to provide a good range of GCSEs.
- These and other recent improvements show that senior leaders are in a good position to bring about further improvements.
- Parents have a very high level of confidence in the academy. Very few express any dissatisfaction. The academy is oversubscribed for Year 7 in September 2014. A substantial proportion of Year 11 students have expressed an interest in joining the sixth form.
- Staff are now proud to work at the academy, which they see as having improved considerably in the recent past.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The trustees have an accurate view of the academy's strengths and areas for development. Governors and trustees understand performance data and what they tell them about the school's performance when compared with others locally and nationally.
 - Trustees and governors have an increasingly good understanding of teachers' performance and of how this is used to determine pay. They meet their statutory responsibilities, such as to keep students safe.
 - Trustees and governors challenge school leaders to bring about improvement and support them in doing so. They ensure that spending is prudent and check the impact of decisions such as use of additional funding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138370
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	440089

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	883
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vince Flower
Principal	Steve Margetts
Telephone number	01803 329351
Fax number	01803 316297
Email address	admin@tqlearn.com

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