

Name of School:	Torquay Academy
Principal:	Steve Margetts
Hub:	Kingsbridge
School type:	Sponsored Academy
MAT (if applicable):	

Estimate at this QA Review:	Outstanding
Date of this Review:	7 – 9 March 2018
Estimate at last QA Review	Outstanding
Date of last QA Review	March 2017
Grade at last Ofsted inspection:	Good
Date of last Ofsted inspection:	14 -15 June 2016

Quality Assurance Review

The review team, comprising of host school leaders and visiting reviewers agree that evidence indicates these areas are evaluated as follows:

School Improvement Strategies	Outstanding
Outcomes for Pupils	Outstanding
Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment	Outstanding
Area of Excellence	ACCREDITED
Previously accredited valid Areas of Excellence	Staff Development through Active Coaching; Music
Overall Estimate	Outstanding

Please note that a Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Review is not equivalent to an Ofsted inspection, and agreed estimates from the review are not equivalent to Ofsted judgements.

1. Information about the school

- Torquay Academy is a larger than average secondary school with 1310 pupils, including 182 in the sixth form.
- It converted to become a sponsored academy in September 2012.
- Whilst the proportion of disadvantaged pupil numbers is decreasing each year, it is still ten percent above the national average.
- The vast majority of pupils are from white British backgrounds.
- The number of pupils with an educational, health or care plan (EHCP) is slowly rising and is slightly above the national average.
- The school deprivation indicator is slowly reducing but remains above national levels.
- Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with average scaled scores lower than national averages in reading, writing and maths.
- The school has a very high standing in the community. It was oversubscribed for the past two years, and significantly oversubscribed for the 2018 September intake.

2.1 School Improvement Strategies - Follow up from previous review

- The school development plan indicates clear areas for development and includes precise success criteria. The needs of different groups of students are systematically identified and their needs met.

2.2 School Improvement Strategies - What went well

- The vision, ethos and culture of the school are palpable at every turn. The principal and leadership team have established a spirit of ambition and achievement at Torquay Academy. They are very clear about the direction and trajectory of the school, expressed in their ambitious 2020 vision statement. A positive atmosphere permeates the school through displays, structures, and the pride students have in their school. Staff, students, and parents strongly support leaders' values.
- The development plan is clearly focused on ensuring that every child succeeds. This is evident from the above average progress across the school, together with ambitious individual progress targets. The 'Every Second Counts', learning philosophy, is followed rigorously by all staff.

- Leading by example, the principal's high professional expectations and standards are modelled by all staff and reflected in the positive attitudes and behaviour of students. The leadership team, focuses relentlessly on the core strategies to improve outcomes through high aspirations for pupils, very strong teaching, a dynamic curriculum and through seeking 'marginal gains' to transform the life chances of pupils.
- Recruitment and retention in the sixth form is rapidly improving, with an increase in academic uptake to match the vocational successes.
- The 'Teach Like a Champion' strategy, is consistently effective and evident throughout the academy. It is having a clear impact within classrooms and on achievement. Senior and middle leaders monitor and support this very systematically.
- The 'action coaching' approach continues to ensure the language of learning and self-improvement has an impact on planning and teaching. Staff recognise this as a key learning tool for continued improvement.
- The academy's rigorous assessment system and in-depth evaluation of progress by departments, ensures sequences of learning are adjusted to enable students to maximise their learning opportunities.
- The senior leaders regularly evaluate the impact of the curriculum on students' achievement Furthermore, they continue to review the level effect of each key strategy, to help ensure consistently effective teaching.
- Senior leaders use external validation and organisations such as Partners in Excellence (PiXL), to reflect upon their practices and intervene effectively in ensuring the student behind the data is seen and supported.
- The self-evaluation form (SEF) and academy development plan (ADP) are comprehensive in identifying strategies for improvement and are disseminated and built upon effectively by the departments.
- The senior leadership capacity is growing rapidly through the evidence-led research, active partnership across the South West Teaching Alliance, and use of external national advisors. These enable the school to build strong sustainability and succession planning, which continually drive change through the development of improvement ideas underpinned by strong levels of trust.
- The curriculum is continuously reviewed to ensure it reflects the changing intake and meets the needs of the sixth form population, through a greater range of academic courses. Decisions around the curriculum are carefully considered by the leadership team.

2.3 School Improvement Strategies - Even better if...

all staff further identify and disseminate best practice across the school, especially in regard to deepening the learning of the most able to ensure they achieve the ambitious outcomes set for them.

3.1 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Follow up from previous review

- Students take pride in their work, and presentation is consistently high. Expectations for marking are rigorously monitored, and the timing and pace of lessons is appropriate. The use of higher order questioning by teachers has been promoted successfully through the 'teach like a champion' (TLAC) approach.

3.2 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - What went well

- Relationships between students and teachers are very strong, which has created a very positive and trusting environment for students to work within. They know they can trust their teachers to support their learning. This is expressed strongly by students and has significantly changed their attitudes to education.
- Through the example of the principal, the senior leadership team is very visible around the school. All school staff know their students very well, building strong inter-personal relationships which supports very good behaviour in and around the school. Students have a positive outlook for the future. Staff have created an environment that is safe, challenging, and encourages students to be inquisitive and learn from mistakes. The strong resilience exhibited by students is ably and actively supported by teachers.
- Over the past few years there has been a significant focus on ensuring that students are working towards challenging target grades. Pastoral leaders tightly monitor students' progress and intervene as appropriate to support those who are underperforming.
- Teachers use questions well within lessons, reinforcing the TLAC approach. This ensures questions are probing. First answers not always accepted but followed through to help individual students to master their understanding. The 'cold calling' approach keeps all students 'on their toes' with active listening and attentiveness.
- Pace, time and the interjection of strong subject knowledge, means no time is wasted, enabling at least good progress to be made during lessons and very strong progress over time. Teachers know their classes very well and offer additional support to all those who need it; paying particular attention to target groups.
- The use of 'flipped learning' is used effectively to move the learning forward quickly and engage students in higher order skills. Questions are used to good effect by many teachers to engage and bounce ideas between students. Students are encouraged to frame their own questions.

- Staff in all curriculum areas model learning strategies to help students avoid errors. . The effective use of visualisers and whiteboards enables teachers to assess learning well within lessons and to provide additional support when necessary.
- In a range of subjects, feedback is used in different ways; for example, Google Classroom is used in music in order to provide feedback for students, who are able to offer WWWs and EBIs on each other's performances.
- Sixth Form students benefit from a wide range of character-building activities, such as the student leadership team, peer mentoring and offering literacy support to Year 7. Students are fully engaged with the wider life of the school.

3.3 Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Even better if...

- ... questions were used more frequently to deepen and extend students' understanding.
- ... further opportunities were taken to use the TLAC strategy, 'turn and talk'.
- ... there were more opportunities, building upon best practice, to enable students to move rapidly onto more demanding tasks.

4. Outcomes for Pupils

- Attitudes to learning are very positive and have a very positive impact on the outcomes for students which are overall improving year on year.
- Whilst outcomes provide a positive picture of the school, the current and previous cohorts have suffered from the legacy of a school previously in special measures. Those in younger years are benefitting from the change of practice and higher expectations. Their achievement is improving.
- Current and past data is presented explicitly and clearly. The use of an IDSR type data collection program enables existing data to be compared to current and predicted outcomes. Alongside the rigorous assessment procedures and accurate predictions from last year, current predictions provide a progress 8 figure of at least 0.04.
- Students enter the school in Year 7 below national expectations although this is improving and coming closer to national expectations. The reputation of the school is improving and this is having a positive impact on enrolment. More girls are now coming to the academy.
- Progress 8 for 2017 has been validated at +0.49 which places the school in the top quintile nationally. This was also the situation for lower and middle prior attainers and disadvantaged pupils.
- Prior high attainers met the national average and are predicted to improve into the second quintile in 2018.

- The predicted results for students attaining a GCSE level 4+, particularly for prior middle attainers, in 2018 will place the school well above national expectations.
- Outcomes in the 6th Form are steadily improving – with very strong applied general results. Current predictions show students on A-Level courses are set to achieve in line with national expectations.
- Students are carefully guided by the Sixth Form team towards a range of destinations; the Sixth Form team know their students well and provide bespoke careers advice. This has resulted in a significant increase the number of students entering university.

5. Area of Excellence

Teaching and learning cycles; covering curriculum and assessment.

5.1 Why has this area been identified as a strength?

Torquay Academy is in the third full year of the curriculum and assessment strategy, which sets out a clear quarterly learning cycle. It has created a significant impetus to meet the 'no child left behind' mantra, and is extremely secure in its knowledge-based assessment approach.. The strategy is fully embedded across the school and is having a positive impact on outcomes.

5.2 What actions has the school taken to establish expertise in this area?

- There is a very clear reflective schedule of meetings for different leaders and areas within the academy with a sole purpose of assessing and adjusting teaching and schemes of work. This leads to highly-effective, collaborative planning. The dissemination of expectations around the teaching and learning cycle is set out in a simple flow-diagram.
- There is significant evidence of the continuity in application of the teaching and learning cycle process with the use of a green sticker, which frames the basic knowledge required for the unit as well as the assessment expectations. This is followed by a yellow self-evaluative sticker, which is used by students and teachers to measure progress.
- Staff have a very sharpened focus on learning for improvement and planning with very clear links to examination technique and preparation. This leads to high pace and urgency in lessons through diagnostic assessments. Scrutiny and questioning into the effectiveness of this approach is provided by heads of year and subject coordinators.

5.3 What evidence is there of the impact on pupils' outcomes?

- The 'super teaching' weeks clearly allow for targeted reinforcement of learning. The evidence provided through data outcomes as well as adjusted schemes of work show clearly that the system is well developed and each departmental area capitalises effectively on it.
- Adjustments have been made to reduce teachers' marking. The use of electronically generated data aids teachers' wellbeing, and supports them in dealing more directly with misconceptions in learning. This is most evident through the joint planning within English. Geography and science staff are using computer-generated results very effectively. There has been significant buy-in from staff in the process and consistent application across the school.
- The use of digital technology, through 'Google forms', has improved the re-teaching within the super teaching weeks.
- The school has improved the homework strategy, setting clear goals and expectations through a nine-week cycle which improving quality and completion rates.
- It is clear from improving outcomes that this curriculum strategy is improving students' confidence, especially when sitting examinations, and contributing to their improving achievement. Over a three year period, progress 8 scores have moved from -1.8 to + 0.49

5.4 What is the name, job title and email address of the staff lead in this area?

NAME: Evan Pugh

TITLE: Vice Principal

EMAIL: epugh@tqacademy.co.uk

6. What additional support would the school like from the Challenge Partners network, either locally or nationally?

Leaders would like to continue to play an active part in Challenge Partners in the region.

This review will support the school's continuing improvement. The main findings will be shared within the school's hub in order that it can inform future activities.

