

Inspection of Tiverton High School

Bolham Road, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6SQ

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils do not attend school, or they arrive late. Once in school, they do not arrive to lessons punctually, or they truant. This is too readily accepted by the school and pupils. It has become normalised. Staff find the behaviour policies and systems unwieldy. As a result, pupils do not experience consistently high expectations for their behaviour or attendance. This impacts negatively on their learning.

Pupils are taught about the importance of respecting others. However, pupils reported that bullying is common in the school. Pupils shared their worries that staff are often too busy to follow up their concerns. Pupils, parents and carers do not have confidence that the school will manage incidents of bullying when they happen.

Recently, the school has raised its expectations of pupils' achievement. However, the changes that the school has made to the curriculum are new. These have not had an impact on pupils' learning. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not achieve well.

Pupils enjoy a wide programme of clubs. As well as trips locally and abroad, the annual activities week provides pupils with new experiences. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to be ambassadors for their school. Many pupils proudly display multiple badges on their blazers that reflect their achievements and rewards.

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

The school works productively with external stakeholders and responds to feedback earnestly. This has helped to bring about some recent improvements to the curriculum. However, the school has not gone far enough in tackling the weaknesses in pupils' behaviour and attendance. There is little sign that these aspects are improving. The school and the governing body have an accurate view of these weaknesses. Even so, their work to bring about improvement has not been successful. This is because it has been poorly implemented and, at times, lacked urgency. The school and the governing body have become too accepting of the factors that hinder school improvement, rather than aiming to overcome these challenges. Across the school, there is a culture of blame which negatively impacts on staff's morale and well-being. Parents voiced concerns about the standards of education and behaviour at the school.

The school has attempted to reset expectations so that pupils are ready to learn. Pupils start the day with new, suitable routines. However, pupils' poor punctuality to school undermines the intended impact of this work. Many pupils have poor attendance rates. While there are systems in place to address high absence rates, these are not effective. The school has not set high enough expectations to ensure that pupils understand the need to attend school regularly and to arrive at lessons on time. Pupils experience a disjointed curriculum. As a result, they have gaps in their knowledge that persist. This hinders their achievement considerably.

Staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough. While some pupils follow the school's rules, others do not. This leads to low-level disruption during lessons and transition times. Some pupils expressed their concern about being in some parts of the school, especially during the change-over time between lessons. Pupils also shared their lack of confidence in the school to tackle incidents of bullying when they are reported. As a result, some pupils do not find being at school an enjoyable experience, while others cannot learn without interruption.

The school is developing the curriculum so that more subjects identify the key information that pupils should learn. However, this work is in the early stages. It has not been successful enough in remedying pupils' weak achievement over time. A lack of training and support means that the delivery of the curriculum has varying impact on pupils' achievement. While teachers encourage pupils to recall their learning, they do not check pupils' prior understanding well enough. This makes it difficult for pupils to learn new content effectively. As a result, across many subjects, pupils do not learn as well as they should. Pupils are not well prepared for the next stages of their education, training or employment.

The school has devised suitable systems to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. It makes sure that staff are aware of pupils' differing needs, including those who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision). However, a lack of training means that some staff do not have the expertise to adapt learning for pupils with SEND. Staff do not meet pupils' needs well enough. This means that many pupils with SEND struggle to learn the curriculum.

The school identifies the needs of pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. It ensures that these pupils receive the support that they need to become confident and fluent readers.

The school has recently introduced a new personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. This is organised well to ensure that pupils learn all that they should in readiness for the next stage of their lives. This new approach is having the greatest impact on the youngest pupils, who are learning fresh content. This is not the case for older pupils, who have not had the same breadth in their previous learning. Some pupils have a fragmented understanding of this curriculum. This hinders their full preparation for life in modern Britain.

The school has a well-considered careers programme. For example, Year 10 pupils value the opportunity to undertake work experience. Pupils receive appropriate advice and guidance about the post-16 options available to them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Attendance rates are low. Many pupils miss large portions of their learning due to their absence. As a result, they struggle to build a coherent body of knowledge and achieve well. The school must ensure that its expectations for attendance are raised, shared and understood. It should make sure that there are clear systems to identify the reasons for pupils' absence and then support pupils to overcome these barriers.
- The school's expectations for pupils' behaviour are not high enough. Staff do not follow the behaviour systems consistently well. As a result, low-level disruption, lateness to school and truancy from lessons have become the norm. The behaviour of some pupils causes others to feel anxious and it disturbs the learning of others. The school must ensure that there are suitable systems to promote positive behaviour and that these are well understood and followed by everyone.
- Pupils and parents do not trust the school to manage incidents of bullying and discrimination effectively. As a result, pupils do not have confidence that any issues that they raise will be resolved. This reduces pupils' enjoyment of school. The school must ensure that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively so that pupils and parents have the confidence to report issues.
- The curriculum, and how it is taught, is not helping pupils to build a strong body of knowledge over time. Assessment strategies do not check if pupils' knowledge is secure before they learn new content. As a result, pupils do not achieve well over time. The school should ensure that the curriculum for all subjects sets out what pupils should know and remember. It should also ensure that staff are suitably equipped to teach the curriculum and check pupils' learning.
- Teachers have differing levels of expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that many pupils with SEND are not able to access the curriculum. This hinders their achievement. The school should make sure that staff have the expertise that they need to enable pupils with SEND to learn all that they should.
- The school has not acted within enough success or urgency to tackle the weaknesses in the school. It does not have the capacity to bring about much-needed changes, especially to pupils' behaviour. The school must build capacity and ensure that it acts swiftly to bring about sustained and effective change to improve pupils' experiences of school.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

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	113548
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10344486
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Rigamonti (co-chair) Lucy Bull (co-chair)
Headteacher	Sammy Crook
Website	www.tiverton.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school hosts a specially resourced provision on behalf of Devon County Council. This provides support for eight pupils with autism and communication needs.
- 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.
- The school uses one registered and six unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school has recently set up an alternative provision for pupils within the school. This has reduced the number of pupils attending provision away from the school site.
- The school is part of the Federation of Tiverton Schools. The federation includes this school and two primary schools.

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.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and teachers.
- The lead inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the co-chairs. They spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, art and design, history and food technology. 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 with pupils about their experiences of school. They observed the school during lessons, watched lesson changes and visited breaktimes.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, such as the school development plan, attendance and behaviour data, and minutes of governance meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also viewed the responses to the online pupil survey and the responses to the online staff survey.

Inspection team

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