

On Track Education Centre Totnes

Parragon Building, Ford Road, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5LQ

Inspection dates

17–19 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Sixth form provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment well. They take too little account of the progress pupils are making as a consequence of the teaching they receive.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across all subjects and across the school's three sites. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics.
- Leaders do not have an accurate view of the academic progress that pupils make. Systems to track pupils' progress are applied inconsistently by leaders and teachers.
- Teachers do not consistently follow the school's marking policy. As a consequence, pupils do not have a clear idea of what they do well and how to improve their work.
- Pupils do not make good progress across a range of subjects. In mathematics in particular, progress is too slow.
- The level of challenge in some subjects is too low.
- The sixth form exhibits the same inconsistencies in outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment as the school as a whole. Consequently, it requires improvement.
- The school's recording of behavioural incidents does not give sufficient emphasis to the views of pupils involved in these incidents.
- The school's admission register does not meet the legal requirements.
- The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' personal development is good. Leaders have a clear understanding of the progress pupils make in their social and emotional development. They use this knowledge well to inform their planning for pupils' individual needs.
- Teachers and other members of staff develop positive relationships with pupils that promote their personal development well.
- Many pupils join the school with a history of disrupted education. The school works well with them to re-engage them in learning. For some pupils, it provides an environment in which they can experience success for the first time.
- The school is successful in helping pupils learn to manage their behaviour better.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on pupils' progress is monitored and evaluated more effectively
 - accurate assessment of pupils' achievement informs teaching
 - the recording and analysis of behavioural incidents is improved in order to provide leaders with a useful resource in their drive to improve behaviour further
 - the admission register is maintained in accordance with legal requirements.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently plan lessons that challenge pupils and stimulate their interest in learning so that they make good progress across all subjects
 - give pupils sufficient information on what they do well and how to improve their work, especially in mathematics.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
 - Ensure that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 15).
 - Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and consistently meet the independent school standards (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).
- The school must make arrangements to meet the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders do not monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment closely or effectively enough. The school's records of lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work show that leaders have not established effective processes to monitor and evaluate the quality of the education provided to pupils at On Track. Leaders' observations of learning in lessons do not focus closely enough on the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress and attainment. This is also the case with the school's scrutiny of pupils' work. As a result of this, school leaders do not have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and have not acted quickly enough to tackle underperformance by teachers and underachievement by pupils.
- School leaders are introducing a new system to track pupils' academic progress. It is being used effectively on the Barnstaple site but not on the Totnes site where, for example, pupils' academic records were incomplete. These omissions were compounded by inconsistencies in the use of the system by staff. As a consequence, leaders do not have an accurate overview of the academic progress made by pupils across all the school's sites.
- At the time of the previous additional inspection in November 2015, the school's admission register did not meet the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Some improvements have been made, but at the time of the inspection the admission register still did not fully comply with the regulations. This situation is easily rectifiable and does not have a serious impact on pupils' welfare, health and safety, or their academic and personal development.
- It was also noted at the previous additional inspection in 2015 that pupils are not routinely required to sign the reports in the behaviour incident log or to provide their views directly and agree to actions to reduce the likelihood of the recurrence of inappropriate behaviour. School leaders have yet to rectify this.
- The school's marking policy is clear and has well-defined principles and expectations of staff. Despite this, there is very little evidence that teachers are following the policy, particularly in mathematics.
- School leaders have a thorough understanding of pupils' backgrounds and particular needs, interests and future plans. The school is making effective use of a web-based programme to track pupils' emotional and social development. This is providing staff with detailed information about the stages of development that pupils have gone through, giving a greater consistency and precision to their work in this area. The information generated by this process is of particular use to new staff or staff who begin working closely with a new pupil for the first time. School leaders have a better grasp of the progress that pupils make in their personal development than they do of pupils' academic progress.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides a range of opportunities for pupils to follow both academic and vocational courses. Given the disrupted educational histories of many of the pupils who join the school, the emphasis is rightly on the acquisition of key skills in literacy and numeracy. Pupils follow individualised timetables which are constructed to take into account their prior attainment and aptitudes.
- A small number of pupils undertake part or all of their education off-site in alternative provision. This allows the school to cater for individual pupils' needs by providing them with access to a wider range of opportunities than the school can provide by itself.
- School leaders successfully promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This is seen particularly in the school's well-developed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. To take one example, this year pupils have looked closely at the festival of Diwali and Hindu dietary customs, linking this to the politics and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain, not just through its PSHE education programme but by modelling the values of respect and tolerance in staff's interactions with pupils. In addition, there are displays around the school's three sites which explain fundamental British values very clearly. Leaders are aware of their duty to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Again, this is made explicit on displays around the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The proprietor has not ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
 - The proprietor has not ensured that the school's accessibility policy is effective enough to meet the requirements of paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The policy is not a single document but is spread across a number of policies; this reduces its effectiveness as a working document. Targets are too vague and there is no clear strategy to improve accessibility. Overall, the school's approach to accessibility is not successfully producing a plan to increase the extent to which

pupils with disabilities can participate in the school's curriculum or access the physical environment of the school.

- The proprietor has overseen an expansion of the school in recent years which has involved the opening of new sites in West Yarnar and Barnstaple. These are a significant addition to the capacity of the school's premises and provide good environments in which to learn.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding and child protection policy is thorough, complies with all the relevant legislation and follows all the guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Education. A useful summary is provided for parents on the school's website. The single central record of checks on the backgrounds of teachers and other staff is well maintained. Staff have received training in safeguarding and child protection which is updated regularly. They have all received and read the first part of 'Keeping children safe in education', July 2015, as part of this training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teachers' planning varies in its quality and its impact. Planning is stronger in English, art and PSHE education, for example, and pupils are making better academic progress in these subjects than others. In mathematics and science, planning is weak and the pupils are neither challenged nor engaged effectively. Teachers' planning is more successful in taking into account pupils' behavioural targets and information about their social and emotional development.
- Pupils' work shows that the level of challenge that teachers present to them is not consistent and where it is too low their progress slows.
- In the school as a whole, teachers do not use information about what pupils know, understand and can do effectively to inform their planning to meet pupils' individual needs. This is partly a consequence of the lack of accurate baseline assessments of pupils' attainment and abilities on entry to the school. Furthermore, given the shortcomings of the school's academic tracking systems, it is not clear that teachers are intervening swiftly enough to tackle underachievement.
- Teachers do not consistently follow the school's marking policy. Pupils are not given enough information to affirm what they do well and show how to improve their work. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where incorrect work is frequently marked as correct. This is a serious impediment to pupils' progress as it does not allow pupils to learn from their mistakes or teachers to address pupils' misconceptions effectively.
- The wide range of individual needs of the pupils at On Track means that most teaching is done on a one-to-one basis. Relationships between teachers, key workers and pupils are good. Teachers expect pupils to work with positive attitudes and put a great deal of effort into getting them to engage with their learning.
- The school provides parents with detailed reports on how their children are progressing. The information on pupils' social and emotional development is accurate and gives parents a clear idea of their child's progress. Information on academic progress is less useful as it is undermined by the lack of consistency with which teachers record pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils often enter the school with very low self-esteem and self-confidence, partly as a result of prolonged periods of disrupted education in which they have not thrived or succeeded. Leaders and other staff work very hard to improve pupils' self-belief and improve their attitudes to learning. Pupils speak very positively about the impact of this work in improving their confidence and social skills. They also feel that staff know them well and take a genuine interest in them as people.
- Displays around the school include examples of pupils' work; pupils are learning to take pride in their work, but for some of those with particularly low self-esteem this is still a difficult hurdle to clear. Nonetheless, the school keeps encouraging them to value their work.
- Pupils receive independent and impartial careers information, advice and guidance which helps them to make informed decisions about their future. This allows them to follow their interests and contributes well to their personal development.

- Pupils are safe and feel safe; they also know how to keep safe, including while online.
- The school's use of alternative provision means that pupils' needs, interests and aspirations are catered for and this contributes well to their personal development. Work experience makes a similar contribution to pupils' personal development and it is sometimes the part of their education that they value the most.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are at the school because they have not thrived in mainstream education. They enter with a range of social, emotional and mental health problems that have often led them to display very problematic behaviour in the past. The school works well with pupils to improve their behaviour and to take greater responsibility for it.
- Behaviour at the school is improving. The number of behavioural incidents has reduced dramatically this year. The use of fixed-term exclusions has also declined. Improved training for staff and an approach that regards exclusion as an inappropriate response to dealing with the behaviour of pupils who have been disengaged with education in the past lies behind this marked reduction in exclusions. This approach means that pupils maximise their time in education.
- Overall attendance at On Track is improving and is particularly strong at the Barnstaple site. Case studies show that some pupils' attendance records have been transformed since they joined the school. Many pupils with historically very low levels of attendance, or who have refused to attend school in the past, now have very good records, in some cases approaching near to 100%. Effective use of work experience helps to increase some pupils' attendance.
- Some pupils struggle to control the language they use, but staff work patiently with them to address this issue. Teachers sensitively challenge the use of derogatory language or swearing when it occurs in lessons or around the school.
- Pupils respect the school environment and the work of other pupils that is displayed around the school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils join the school after disrupted educational histories and some have not been in education for a period prior to their arrival. Many join the school part-way through the academic year or key stage. As a result of this, when they enter the school, pupils are often working at levels that are much lower than pupils nationally of similar ages and abilities. Even when pupils' disrupted educational experiences are taken into account, however, they do not make enough progress consistently across subjects.
- Pupils' progress is particularly slow in mathematics, where scrutiny of pupils' work shows insufficient gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Slow progress over time was also evident in work in science, where, as in mathematics, much of the work set lacks challenge. In English, however, there were clear signs of progress being made, some of it rapid. Work in English challenges and stimulates pupils' interests more effectively and they make better progress as a result. This is particularly clear in the responses of some pupils to creative writing exercises.
- In 2015, the success rate in GCSE examinations was much lower than for level 1 and level 2 vocational courses, including diplomas. Results in GCSE examinations have been falling over the last few years, with fewer than half of GCSE entries in 2015 being awarded at grades A* to G. Pupils' achievement in other courses has stayed broadly steady.
- The monitoring of pupils' achievement is too variable across the school's sites. At the Barnstaple site, for example, there is an effective baseline assessment of pupils when they arrive; this allows more accurate monitoring of pupils' progress to be made there than at other sites.
- The destinations information for pupils in Year 11 in 2015 shows that approximately 80% went on to sustained education, employment or training. This represents an improvement on past figures, indicating that pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next stages. Nonetheless, the opportunities open to them are restricted somewhat by their slow academic progress.

Sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The school has a small number of students in the sixth form, nearly half of whom are studying part time. Most post-16 students are studying level 1 and level 2 courses.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been too slow to recognise and address the shortcomings in the quality of post-16 education that it provides. As in the rest of the school, leaders do not monitor the progress of students in the sixth form effectively enough. The school's information on how students in the sixth form are performing lacks rigour and reliability. As a consequence, school leaders do not have a clear grasp of what academic progress students are making. Similarly, the impact of teaching on students' progress is not evaluated effectively. These shortcomings contribute to students' slow progress across all subjects.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is inconsistent. In some subjects, such as mathematics and science, teachers do not give students enough information on how to improve their work. By contrast, in English, students' progress improves as they are given precise advice on what they do well and how to improve their work further.
- Those students who did not achieve a grade C or above in GCSE English and mathematics in Year 11 are continuing to take courses in these subjects. In mathematics, it is not clear that they are making sufficient progress towards improving their results. Students are not developing key mathematical skills effectively enough and they are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training as they might be. By contrast, work in English shows a better picture of improvement.
- Outcomes for those students in the sixth form who take level 1 and level 2 vocational courses, including diplomas, are better than those for GCSE entrants.
- Students' personal development, behaviour and welfare in the sixth form are good. The school works well with the students to develop their emotional literacy and helps them to manage their own behaviour more effectively. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating sixth form students' emotional and social development are much more effective than those they use to monitor academic progress. This allows them to set meaningful targets in terms of personal development for students in the sixth form. Students say they feel as though they are treated like adults.
- Suitable work experience is a prominent part of some students' study programmes and makes a positive contribution to their personal development.
- Case studies show that the attendance of some students has improved while they have been in the sixth form.
- Information on students' destinations after the sixth form shows that most of the small number of students who left On Track last year went on to further education, apprenticeships or employment. The school works well to manage students' transition to further education. Students receive effective careers guidance as part of this process. Nonetheless, options for some students are limited by the slow progress they have made in some key skills while at the school.

School details

Unique reference number	131715
Inspection number	10012945
DfE registration number	878/6060

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
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	43
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	13
Number of part-time pupils	6
Proprietor	On Track Education Services
Headteacher	Julie Dixon-Higgins
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,480–£65,436
Telephone number	01803 866462
Website	www.ontrackededucationservices.co.uk
Email address	jdixon-higgins@ontrackededucation.com
Date of previous inspection	8–10 May 2013

Information about this school

- On Track Education Centre Totnes is owned by On Track Education Services. It provides education on three sites in Totnes, West Yarner and Barnstaple.
- On Track Education Centre Totnes is a smaller than average special school which caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. A number also have autistic spectrum conditions. Most pupils are placed at the school by local authorities. Six pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- All pupils currently on roll have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses five alternative providers: Bicton College, Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, the Husbandry School, Future Farms and Whole Life.
- The last standard inspection took place on 8–10 May 2013. The school had an emergency inspection on 24 November 2014 and an additional inspection on 3 November 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning on all the school sites in the company of the senior leaders of the school. In addition, a selection of pupils' work was examined.
- The inspectors observed pupils arriving and leaving school and during break and lunchtime.
- The inspectors had meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the director of education for On Track Education Services, who represented the proprietor. They also spoke informally to pupils and staff during the inspection.
- A wide range of documentary evidence was scrutinised, including the full range of the school's policies. Documents relating to safeguarding and child protection were also checked, as were the school's records of the checks it makes on teachers.
- In making their judgements, the inspectors took into account two responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online parental questionnaire. There were no responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

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