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11 May 2018

Mr Tony Sammon
Headteacher
Tor School
Beckery New Road
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Dear Mr Sammon

Short inspection of Tor School

Following my visit to the school on 26 April 2018 with Teresa Hill, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in September 2014.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

The school is in the process of considerable change with regard to premises and commissioning arrangements with the local authority. You are taking the opportunity at this exciting time of school development to revamp the curriculum. You have only been in the new building since February this year, so the radical changes that have been put in place are very new and not fully established. The changes that have been made are the right ones and for the right reasons. You acknowledge that it is taking time to get used to these changes. You are providing appropriate support to staff and pupils to ensure this transition is smooth.

The new building provides an enriching environment for pupils. The equipment and resources are of good quality, for example in the design and technology area. Furniture and lighting have been carefully chosen to support pupils' sensory and emotional needs. The pupils we spoke to told us how much they enjoyed their time in Tor School. They feel that staff know them well, listen to them and have high expectations of their behaviour and achievements. This is clearly seen through the pupils' high-quality art, design and technology work, which is celebrated throughout the school's rooms.

At the previous inspection, the members of the management committee were asked to visit the different sites used by the school more regularly to improve their own

understanding of how well each pupil is doing. There is now only one purpose-built site. As with the rest of the school, there have been considerable changes to the committee membership and their involvement with the school. They are dedicated and strongly supportive of you, and your vision. They ensure that they are kept informed and involved with pupils, staff and the intended future developments of the school's provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fit for purpose. The designated safeguarding lead and deputy have a shared understanding of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. Records relating to child protection are clear and appropriately stored. The school liaises with other agencies and providers to help protect the safety and well-being of pupils.

Staff at all levels know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil and follow the school's procedures when they do. Staff have appropriate training and regular updates about safeguarding. Staff are supportive and considerate and use local information to protect the pupils in their care. As a result, pupils feel safe and are kept safe when they are in school.

Inspection findings

- The first line of enquiry considered how well the school ensures that pupils attend school, and stay in mainstream education, as often as they can. Most pupils on the school roll have had gaps in their education and their attendance at their previous school(s) has been poor. Although most pupils attend this school more frequently, we agreed that some pupils do not attend school as often as they can. Sometimes this is because parents and carers do not ensure that the pupil is ready for school in time to get their taxi, or they take them on holiday in school time. In addition, some are on part-time timetables. You are working determinedly to increase the amount of time that these pupils are expected, and able, to attend school. The school needs to continue to work closely with families and other professionals to ensure that this happens in a timely fashion.
- The arrangements in place to taxi pupils to and from school and the alternative provision limits pupils' learning time. The amount of time spent waiting at the start of the school day for all pupils to arrive is too long. Again, this impinges on their education. You are aware of this misuse of time and have discussed this with the local authority and others. More work needs to be done to reduce the education time that is needlessly squandered.
- The school works very effectively with partner schools to enable younger pupils to successfully return to mainstream education. You are also effective at brokering and supporting pupils through 'managed moves' from one secondary school to another. This helps those pupils who have been permanently excluded to learn from their mistakes and have a second chance in mainstream education.
- You understand that pupils can feel isolated from their classmates when they are not able to attend school. You appreciate that they miss the company of their

classmates at social times and the enjoyment of learning together. You have been exploring ways to enable pupils to access learning remotely through robotic and electronic devices. We agreed that this was something that needs to be developed to improve pupils' mental health and to enable them to continue to learn with their classmates when they are unable to attend school.

- The next line of enquiry focused on how well the management committee monitors and checks the reports from the school's leaders about pupils' achievements. There is a range of monitoring systems in place to check the quality of the school's work to measure and improve pupils' progress. You collect a lot of information about the pupils, and staff know them very well. Based on this information, the management committee supports you to take effective action where there is underperformance in the quality of teaching and learning, involving training, coaching and further monitoring. We discussed how all the information about pupils could be refined to enable the management committee to provide greater challenge and support, for example around pupils' attendance.
- The final line of enquiry focused on how effectively the school's curriculum enables all pupils to reach their potential. We found that for those pupils who attend school regularly, it prepares them effectively for the next stage in their life, including meaningful work-experience opportunities, based on pupils' interests and needs.
- Changes to the curriculum have raised teachers' expectations. The school's new approach to teaching and learning is providing pupils with more opportunities to develop skills and gain meaningful qualifications. There is a strong emphasis on the teaching and learning of English and mathematics. For pupils of primary age, interventions are short term, personalised to the pupil, and designed to jointly support the pupil and mainstream school staff. At key stage 3, the full national curriculum is followed, with a focus on reintegrating pupils back into mainstream education.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- pupils attend school as often as they can so that they get the full, good-quality, rounded education to which they are entitled
- they work with the local authority and others to reduce the amount of education time being wasted by pupils' travel arrangements
- pupils who are unable to attend school can continue to learn and socialise with their classmates
- the school refines the information provided to the management committee so that it can further increase the levels of challenge and support provided for all aspects of the school's work.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the management committee, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Somerset. This

letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

We agreed the timetable and activities for the day. We worked with you and other senior leaders during the day. We met with other leaders, members of the management committee and a director of the alternative provision used by the school. We spoke with groups of pupils and observed them during the day. We examined the quality of pupils' work and observed pupils' learning in lessons. In addition, we spoke on the telephone with two headteachers from local schools.

We considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including records relating to safeguarding, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, assessment information, and the school's self-evaluation and action plans.

We took account of the three responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. We considered the 19 responses from staff to the Ofsted electronic survey. There were no responses from pupils to the Ofsted electronic survey.