

Inspection of Tor School

Beckery New Road, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 9NS

Inspection dates: 22–23 January 2020

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The Tor School is a haven for its pupils. Typically, pupils join the school following long periods of instability in their education. However, pupils settle rapidly because of the calm and orderly atmosphere. Staff work hard to promote a sense of belonging for pupils. Strong, positive relationships between staff and pupils enhance this. Consequently, pupils experience success quickly. Pupils go on to attend better, achieve well and believe in themselves.

Staff share very high expectations of pupils. Preparation for the next stage of pupils' education is everyone's priority. Pupils benefit from studying personalised programmes. They receive useful and well considered careers advice. Pupils re-engage in their learning because they know staff care about how well they do.

Leaders have worked with staff efficiently to manage complex behaviour and attitudes. This is a school for pupils with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). There are clear policies that staff follow diligently. Staff secure positive relationships with pupils effectively. Discriminatory or unkind behaviour is not tolerated. Collectively, this helps to ensure pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and school.

Staff, parents and pupils agree that the school is harmonious and a good place to be. Pupils believe they can contribute to what and when they can study and learn. Parents are very positive about the difference the school makes for their children. However, parents do not contribute to leaders' decisions. Leaders rightly identify that this could be better.

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

Leaders are very effective. They have successfully strengthened the curriculum. They have taken appropriate action to improve the areas identified at the last inspection. Governors challenge leaders well. This helps ensure that leaders know what is working and what to improve. Staff love working at the school. They share leaders' ambition. Staff say that leaders consider their well-being and support them to do better. Consequently, the school is continuously improving.

Leaders engage with the wider community well. The headteacher is a key part of the 'partnership board', set up by local headteachers, with an aim to reduce exclusions. Tor staff support local schools regularly to improve support for pupils at risk of exclusion. Local headteachers describe this as effective.

The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs very well. Pupils arrive at the school having had disjointed experiences of education. Staff assess pupils' needs precisely and choose appropriate pathways and interventions to help pupils improve. Strong curriculum planning and skilled teachers quickly capture pupils' interest. Gaps in

knowledge are filled. Pupils learn to succeed. Pupils' attitudes to learning improve quickly and many reintegrate into mainstream education. Older pupils go on to attain qualifications in key areas of the curriculum. However, some pupils rely too heavily on the good support they get at Tor School. This means that pupils do not do as well as leaders would like when they move into post-16 education.

Staff are highly skilled and motivated. Leaders provide useful training on improving behaviour management. Staff have worked together to improve the curriculum. As a result, staff know what to do, and they promote a love of learning. Teachers skilfully use humour and curriculum planning to capture pupils' enthusiasm. Teachers use what they know about pupils to adapt planning to meet pupils' individual needs. Consequently, pupils learn the curriculum successfully.

The curriculum in English, mathematics, art and religious studies promotes high standards. Staff prioritise reading, and they support younger pupils very well to learn how to read fluently. Pupils take pride in their work. They try hard because they are keen to please staff, who they say care about them. The science curriculum is weaker, and pupils are not remembering as much as they do in other subjects.

The promotion of pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils benefit from a rounded and considered curriculum. Staff ensure that pupils have a rich experience of their local and wider community. For example, pupils regularly visit art galleries, museums and cities, such as Bristol. Pupils discuss beliefs and values in religious studies and the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. This helps develop pupils' spirituality and preparation for adult life in modern Britain. Pupils contribute when staff plan the PSHE curriculum. However, there are no opportunities for pupils to help plan improvements that affect everyone at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The leadership of safeguarding is strong. Leaders know their local setting and related challenges very well. For example, leaders have rightly focused on how to support pupils who are vulnerable to exploitation. Leaders have implemented strong systems for managing safeguarding and responding to these challenges. Consequently, staff follow processes diligently and in a timely fashion. Leaders take appropriate action if they are unhappy with the response from other agencies.

Safer recruitment processes are robust. Leaders ensure that they follow statutory guidance. They make appropriate checks when appointing new staff. Staff record checks for recruitment diligently on the single central register.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve curriculum planning and delivery. Consequently, the curriculum has strengthened considerably and is implemented

well in many subjects. However, the delivery of science does not have the same security and consistency as in other subjects. Leaders need to ensure that pupils' learning is as coherent, and at the same standard, in science as it is in other subjects.

- Leaders have rapidly improved the school since the time of the last inspection. However, the improvements are recent and therefore not secure. For example, leaders have rightly identified that there is still more to do to ensure pupils sustain their placements when they leave the school after Year 11. Therefore, leaders need to embed recent improvements so that pupils are fully prepared to succeed when they do not have the security the school provides.
- The school struggles to recruit parents to the management committee. This means that parents, although very happy, do not get to influence strategic decisions made for their children. Therefore, governors should find different ways to represent parents' views at committee meetings.
- The personal development offer is strong. Pupils contribute to constructing their own learning. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to make a positive, tangible contribution to the life of the school and wider community. Leaders should introduce ways that pupils can contribute to how the school meets the needs of every pupil.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	134694
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10111529
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Brian Walton
Headteacher	Tony Sammon
Website	www.torschool.org
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Tor school is a pupil referral unit. At the time of the last full inspection, the school was known as the Mendip Partnership School. Pupils were in four separate sites under the same leadership. Since that time, the school has moved into a purpose-built setting. All pupils who are referred to the unit learn on the same site. Teachers from the school support some pupils and teachers in mainstream settings.
- The school uses REACH and Make It alternative provision for some pupils.
- Pupils attend the school because of medical and/or behavioural needs; most are pupils with SEND.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

- We did deep dives in these subjects: English and early reading, mathematics, science and art. We met with senior and curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils. We visited lessons and scrutinised pupils' work and talked to pupils. I listened to some pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, we met with those responsible for safeguarding, including the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and other key leaders. We spoke to pupils and observed how the school was organised during breaktimes and lunchtimes. We analysed documentary evidence, including the records kept by leaders, recruitment records and training logs.
- We met with leaders to discuss the wider curriculum, how they manage behaviour and records of bullying, and behaviour incidents. We considered 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. We considered responses to Ofsted's pupils' and staff's surveys, which were completed during the inspection.

Inspection team

Matthew Barnes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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