

Torquay Boys' Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113556
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	289674
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	David Humphries HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	1046
6 th form	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Wills–Pope
Headteacher	Mr R E Pike
Date of previous school inspection	3–6 March 2003
School address	Shiphay Manor Drive Torquay TQ2 7EL
Telephone number	01803 615501
Fax number	01803 614613

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	6–7 June 2007
Inspection number	289674

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Torquay Boys' Grammar School is a selective school drawing students from a large number of primary schools in Torbay and the surrounding area. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below average, although the school's catchment area is not prosperous. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or with a first language other than English. The school has held specialist languages status for a number of years and has recently been awarded a second specialism in business and enterprise education.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Torquay Boys' Grammar is an outstanding school. One parent wrote, 'We are extremely pleased with the school, its work ethic, its nurturing atmosphere and the hard work and dedication of the staff.' This aptly captures some of the key strengths of the school. Expectations are high and the drive for excellence permeates the work of students and staff. Teaching and learning are extremely effective so that students' achievement is outstanding and they reach exceptionally high standards at each stage of their education. A high quality curriculum is carefully designed to meet students' needs and is particularly successful in enabling the most able to pursue extremely challenging academic goals. This drive for academic achievement is balanced by a deep commitment to students' wider personal and social development. The curriculum is greatly enriched by an extensive range of cultural and sporting activities and there are many opportunities for students to contribute to the life of the school and wider community. The quality of the care, guidance and support provided for students is outstanding. Teachers know their students very well and have a keen awareness of their individual strengths, aspirations and needs.

Students flourish in this purposeful, supportive and stimulating atmosphere. They enjoy their education and develop ambitious aspirations for the future. They are eager to assume responsibility and leadership and this, in turn, helps them to become articulate and confident young men. Their behaviour is excellent; they act safely and responsibly and treat each other with care and respect. Students show a strong commitment to adopting healthy lifestyles, participating enthusiastically in sporting and outdoor activities and contributing to decisions about healthy eating options in the school canteen.

The pursuit of excellence combined with a strong sense of care and humanity lie at the heart of the headteacher's vision for the school. It is a tribute to the quality of his leadership that these values are shared by staff, students and parents, and are evident in so much of the work of the school. He is well supported by a very capable senior leadership team and a group of talented and highly committed middle managers. There is a very strong emphasis on encouraging subject leaders to play an active role in improving the quality of teaching and learning, rather than simply implementing centrally determined policies. This is often very successful in encouraging initiative and innovation and the sharing of good practice. However, while the school is working hard to develop more effective strategies for assessing and tracking students' progress, there are variations in how well this is done in different subjects.

The school analyses all aspects of its performance very thoroughly and senior leaders have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Despite consistently outstanding examination results there is no sense of complacency. Governors clearly understand their role in providing challenge for the work of the school; in practice this is rarely necessary, because the school is so effective at challenging itself. There is a steady upward trend in examination results and the few issues arising from the previous inspection have been tackled very effectively. The school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding. The school is extremely well regarded by the great majority of parents who clearly understand the reasons

for its success. As one parent wrote, 'The school is characterised by strong leadership which sets a clear direction and creates a positive learning culture.'

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding sixth form. At the end of Year 11 most students choose to continue their education in the sixth form. They build very successfully on their earlier achievements to make outstanding progress so that the results they attain in A-level examinations are exceptionally high. Teaching is very effective in encouraging breadth and depth of study, often extending beyond the requirements of the examination syllabus, so that students are extremely well prepared for higher education. The curriculum is outstanding: flexibility and individual support enables the most able students to study subjects outside their formal timetable and the range of subjects on offer is enhanced by a productive partnership with the adjacent girls' grammar school. Students are given first rate advice and guidance, so that they understand clearly what they need to do to achieve the highest examination grades. Sixth formers are a considerable asset to the life of the school. They play a key role in organising house activities and often provide younger students with exemplary and highly supportive role models. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. They are characterised by the same blend of academic excellence with care and support, which is such a prominent feature of the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop a more systematic approach to assessment so that the good practice which is evident in some subjects is extended more consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are exceptionally high, both in the main school and in the sixth form. The attainment of students on entry to the school is well above average and they make rapid progress in Years 7 to 9 so that the standards they reach in national tests at age 14 are extremely high. While there is some variation in results from year to year, there is a steady upward trend in performance. Students continue to make very impressive progress in Years 10 and 11 so that their results in GCSE examinations at age 16 are exceptionally high. There is strong performance across the full range of subjects, with more than half of students achieving A or A* grades. Students' overall progress in the main school is outstanding and is well above the national average for selective boys' schools. Test and examination results are in line with the extremely challenging targets set by the school.

This rapid pace of learning continues through the sixth form. A-level examination results are exceptionally high, with more than two thirds of students achieving A or B grades. Students are encouraged and supported to study additional subjects beyond the usual timetabled programme of lessons and there are examples of students attaining as many as seven very good A-level passes.

First rate personal support and care enable the few students with learning difficulties and disabilities to participate fully in lessons and they also make outstanding progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of the students are outstanding. Students enjoy coming to school; they want to succeed and attendance rates are well above the national average. They are proud of their school and take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities to develop their social and personal skills. They relish opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school and wider community. Sixth formers make a valuable contribution to the running of the house system, organising activities and charity fund raising events. They also provide excellent support for younger students, including providing personal support when they are anxious or helping with their academic work. Students participate actively in the school council and feel empowered to influence school policy. For example, they have been able to share in menu planning with the school chef, enabling them not only to develop their understanding of healthy eating, but also to experience food from a wide variety of cultures. Students have a very strong appreciation of the importance of healthy living and many participate enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting and outdoor activities provided by the school.

Behaviour is excellent. Students build positive and productive relationships with adults and treat each other with care and respect. One parent wrote that, 'The boys, although competitive, are kind and supportive of each other.' Students act very safely and responsibly in lessons and round and about the school. They also feel safe; the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and the school is very successful in developing their awareness of other societies, cultures and religions. As they move through the school students become increasingly confident, articulate and well-rounded individuals with the potential to shape the communities in which they live. Combined with their impressive academic achievement, this ensures that they are very well prepared for further or higher education and future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers have considerable expertise in their subjects and use this to very good effect when planning their lessons. Teaching is well paced, with a good range of activities and resources to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm. An impressive feature of teaching is the emphasis on providing breadth and depth of study by extending students' skills, knowledge and understanding within subjects, rather than simply accumulating examination qualifications. This is coupled with an increasing emphasis on 'guided independence', with students being given freedom to explore particular topics within a framework of activities provided by the teacher. This is particularly successful in the sixth form,

where students are encouraged to develop the learning skills that they will need when they move on to university. Throughout the school students have a natural enthusiasm for learning, and coupled with highly effective teaching this provides a powerful impetus for progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and is very well matched with students' needs and aspirations. For example, in response to requests from students and parents, the school is introducing GCSE courses in drama and physical education. The curriculum in both the main school and sixth form has a strong academic focus, but work related learning features prominently and is linked very successfully with the school's successful bid for specialist business and enterprise status. The school's long-standing specialism in language is used very well to provide breadth of study. For example, a GCSE course in Mandarin is planned for the next school year. A productive partnership with the adjacent girls' grammar school enables the school to offer a wide range of A-level courses in the sixth form.

When there are compelling reasons for an individual student to study a greater range of subjects, the school tries hard to accommodate this by providing supported self-study outside the school day. The formal curriculum is greatly enriched by an outstanding array of educational visits and extra-curricular activities, including more than 50 clubs and societies. These are warmly appreciated by students and make an enormous contribution to their personal and social development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Induction procedures for students transferring from a large number of primary schools are exemplary. They are very well supported by older students who act as mentors and this helps them to adapt quickly to their new school. Thereafter, form tutors and heads of house place a very high priority on getting to know the students in their care and they provide them with excellent personal and academic support. The great majority of sixth formers serve as prefects, establishing a safe and orderly atmosphere at breaks and lunchtimes.

The school is working hard to develop more effective strategies for assessing and tracking students' progress, and setting individual targets for improvement. This is well done in the sixth form, but is more variable in the main school. There are impressive developments in English, but in some other subjects students are less clear about how they are performing and what they need to do to improve.

Vulnerable students and their families receive outstanding support. This is very well coordinated by a pastoral support tutor, drawing effectively on the specialist expertise of outside agencies when this is required. Suitable child protection policies are in place. A great strength of the provision is the way in which vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties or disabilities gain independence through unobtrusive and thoughtful planning which enables them to participate fully in the life of the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is extremely well led by the headteacher, who is highly respected by staff, students and parents. He is very well supported by a strong senior leadership team who have a well balanced range of personal and professional skills which play a key role in sustaining and improving the high quality of provision. Subject leaders are given considerable autonomy to lead and manage their departments. This mostly works very well, although there are variations in how effectively departments are developing assessment strategies. However, this approach is particularly successful in ensuring that staff across the school feel a sense of ownership of important changes and improvements.

Self-evaluation is accurate and well founded on a thorough analysis of all aspects of the school's performance. The governing body provides knowledgeable and active support for the work of the school and encourages the constructively self-critical approach of the senior leadership team. They have worked very successfully with the headteacher to attract additional resources, often in partnership with parents and the wider community. This enormously enhances the quality of provision. For example, the building of a new school hall has facilitated the introduction of a GCSE course in drama. The school provides outstanding value for money.

The school is infused with a lively and open atmosphere which encourages innovation and underpins a relentless drive to provide the very best education for the students. As one parent wrote, 'The school is unique in its positive approach to all its students and we are very lucky to have the leadership of such a stimulating, forward thinking and totally approachable headteacher.'

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
---	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage		
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision		
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B



8 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Torquay Boy's Grammar School, Torquay, TQ2 7EL

I am sure you will remember that your school was inspected on 6–7 June 2007. The inspection team enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire to let us know how they felt about the school. I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report because it explains what your school does well and how it can become even better.

Torquay Boys' Grammar is an outstanding school. There is a very strong drive towards academic excellence, but also an extremely caring and supportive atmosphere. You are very well taught and this, combined with your own eagerness to learn, ensures that you make outstanding progress throughout the school. The standards that you achieve at each stage of your education are exceptionally high.

The curriculum is very well matched with your needs and aspirations and the school tries hard to provide new subjects when there is sufficient demand. The number of subjects on offer in the sixth form is increased by good cooperation with the girls' grammar school. There is a very impressive range of extra-curricular activities and the school provides you with very good opportunities to assume responsibility and leadership. This helps you to become articulate and confident young men, who are very well prepared for higher education and future employment. You behave very well and provide each other with a great deal of mutual support. Sixth formers make an extremely positive contribution to the life of the school, particular through their work in the house system.

The main reason for the success of the school is that you have an outstanding headteacher who is very well supported by a group of able and highly committed staff. They are determined to make the school even better than it is now and there is one thing that we have asked them to do:

- Develop a more systematic approach to assessing your work and tracking your progress.

You can help by thinking carefully about how you are doing and what would improve your work. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector