



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report

Totnes Progressive School

May 2021

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School's Details

School	Totnes Progressive School		
DfE number	878/6068		
Address	Totnes Progressive School Windmill House 21 Ashburton Road Totnes TQ9 5JT		
Telephone number	01803 864484		
Email address	office@top-school.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Laura Manley		
Proprietor	Mr Ross Robens		
Age range	9 to 16		
Number of pupils on roll	121		
	Foundation (Years 5 to 6)	12	Seniors (Years 7 to 11) 109
Inspection dates	26 to 28 May 2021		

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Totnes Progressive School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged between nine and sixteen. The school opened in 2013. It is owned and managed by the proprietor as a limited company. The company has two directors, one of which is the proprietor. A governance group provides the directors with advice and support. This is the school's first inspection by ISI. It was previously inspected by Ofsted in January 2018.
- 1.2 During the period March to August 2020, the school was closed except for children of key workers and a small number of pupils with special educational needs. During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.3 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on-site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.4 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.5 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.6 In 2020, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.7 The school aims to develop and promote academic tenacity, self-reliance, responsibility, resourcefulness and personal and academic conscientiousness. It seeks to do this by creating a learning environment where young people have the freedom, confidence and support to enjoy learning and achieve the very best they can. Its four guiding principles are love, acceptance, respect and safety. The school has a non-punitive culture in which it aims to develop pupils' ability to be kind and considerate to others, especially when making decisions and navigating challenging situations.

About the pupils

- 1.8 Pupils come from a range of professional and social backgrounds, mostly from families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. The school's own assessments indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia, specific and moderate learning difficulties, hearing and visual impairment, social, emotional and mental health concerns, and autistic spectrum disorder. Of these, 15 pupils receive additional support. In addition, 12 pupils have an education, health and care plan funded by the local authority. No pupil has English as an additional language.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inconclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school’s own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2018 to 2020, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils’ performance is in place.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has published a written statement of its policy, which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance, but the school did not consult parents before drawing up and publishing its policy.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education in paragraphs 2 to 4 are met, but that in paragraph 2A [relationships and sex education] is not met.**

Action point 1

- **the school must ensure that it consults parents before drawing up or revising the written statement of its policy with regard to relationships and sex education [paragraph 2A(1)(f)]**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 In most respects, the school provides a safe environment for its pupils. However, its safeguarding policy does not fully reflect current statutory guidance. The proprietor has not carried out an annual review of the school’s safeguarding policies and procedures. Procedures to check that staff have not been barred or prohibited from teaching or management have not always been completed before staff start work. References for new staff have not always been obtained or received before staff start work.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9 to 16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but that in paragraph 7 [safeguarding] is not met.**

Action point 2

- the school must ensure that its safeguarding policy fully reflects current statutory guidance as outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* [paragraph 7(b)]

Action point 3

- the proprietor must ensure that an annual review of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures is carried out [paragraph 7(a) and (b)]

Action point 4

- the school must ensure that it obtains references for all staff before they start work in school [paragraph 7(a) and (b)]

Action point 5

- the school must ensure that it checks the barred list and the lists of those prohibited from teaching and those prohibited from management before staff start work in school [paragraph 7(a) and (b)]

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

2.12 The suitability of the proprietor has been checked as required. The school has not carried out checks to ensure the suitability of other staff in accordance with statutory guidance, or to maintain a register of pre-appointment checks as required. Whilst the school's records indicate that all staff are suitable to work with children, many checks have only been completed after staff have started working at the school. In addition, a small number of staff have not had the relevant checks carried out to ascertain their medical fitness, their right to work in the United Kingdom or their qualifications.

2.13 The standard relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraph 20 is met, but those in paragraphs 18 [suitability of staff] and 21 [single central register of appointments] are not met.

Action point 6

- the school must ensure that all required checks on the suitability of staff are carried out before staff start work at the school [paragraph 18(3)]

Action point 7

- the school must ensure that it ascertains a person's right to work in the United Kingdom and, where relevant, qualifications and records the dates on which these checks were carried out in the single central register of appointments [paragraphs 18(2)(c)(iii) and (iv), 21(3)(a)(iv) and (vii)]

Action point 8

- the school must ensure that it checks the medical fitness of any new member of staff before that person starts work [paragraph 18(2)(c)(ii)]

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.16 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.17 At the time of the inspection, the school had not made available details of its provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language, or particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year.

2.18 The standard relating to the provision of information in paragraph 32 is not met.

Action point 9

- the school must ensure that it makes available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education details of its provision for pupils with an education, health and care plan and those with English as an additional language [paragraph 32(1)(b), 32(3)(b)]

Action point 10

- the school must ensure that it makes available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year [paragraph 32(1)(b), 32(3)(e)]

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.19 Parental complaints, if any, are handled through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant.

2.20 Complaints which have been referred to a panel hearing have not always been handled in accordance with requirements and the school's published procedures. In some cases, members of the panel have had direct involvement in the matters detailed in the complaint, and the panel has not always included one panel member who is independent of the management and running of the school. Whilst the school keeps copies of correspondence with complainants, it does not maintain a clear written record of complaints in accordance with its policy and statutory requirements.

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints in paragraph 33 is not met.

Action point 11

- the school must ensure that it keeps a written record of all complaints made under the formal procedure, detailing whether they are resolved following the formal procedure or proceed to a panel hearing and the action taken by the school as a result of those complaints [paragraph 33(j)(i and ii)]

Action point 12

- for complaints which proceed to a panel hearing, the school must ensure that the panel consists of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint, that at least one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school and that parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied at the panel hearing if they wish [paragraph 33(f), (g) and (h)]

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.22 The proprietor has not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. The proprietor and school's leaders have not been fully conversant with the Independent School Standards Regulations, resulting in: a failure to consult parents with regard to the school's relationships and sex education policy; weaknesses in the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils; shortcomings in the way the school checks the suitability of new staff; missing information which should be made available to parents; and failure to follow required procedure for the handling of complaints.

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 13

- the school must ensure that the proprietor and the school's senior leaders develop a full understanding of the Independent School Standards Regulations, that they consistently meet these standards and that they thereby actively promote the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)]

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, attended tutorial meetings, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the proprietor and the chair of the governance group. Inspectors visited the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school. In addition to face-to-face discussions, some evidence was gathered remotely.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Sims

Reporting inspector

Mrs Heidi Berry

Compliance team inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)