



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Advice Note for a Progress Monitoring Visit

Totnes Progressive School

December 2021

School's details

School name	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 and 6	12	Seniors Years 7 to 11	109
Date of visit	13 December 2021			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Totnes Progressive School is an independent co-educational day school. 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, which the school now refers to as the governing body, provides the directors with advice and support. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 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 (EHC) plan funded by the local authority. Two pupils have English as an additional language, one of whom receives additional support.
- 1.2 The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in May 2021.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.3 This was an unannounced progress monitoring visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the regulatory compliance inspection in May 2021. The visit focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).
- 1.4 Additionally, this visit served as a material change visit to assess the school's proposal to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 120 to 140.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 4, paragraph 18 (checking of members of staff)	Met
Part 4, paragraph 21 (single central register of appointments)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32 (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education

[ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for relationships and sex education (RSE) which is published on the school website. It ensures that every pupil in Years 5 and 6 is provided with relationships education, and every pupil in Years 7 to 11 with RSE. Since the previous inspection, the school has revised and improved its personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme which includes all elements of RSE required by statutory guidance. In making these changes, the school has consulted with parents and taken their views into consideration.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened its provision for safeguarding and now ensures that it fully meets all of the expectations outlined in the latest version of the government's statutory guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE). The school's safeguarding policy was revised effectively prior to the start of the current academic year to take account of changes and new requirements in KCSIE. All staff and governors received appropriate training at the start of the school year to acquaint them with these changes. They have also been trained in how to deal with peer-on-peer abuse and sexualised language. Training has also been offered to parents.
- 2.7 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL), who is a member of the senior leadership team, manages safeguarding effectively and is supported by a deputy DSL and three other members of the safeguarding team. Governance and oversight arrangements have been strengthened. A safeguarding mentor visits and provides support for the DSL every few weeks, and a new, appropriately experienced member of the governing body has taken on responsibility for overseeing safeguarding. The governing body now completes an annual review of safeguarding procedures and practices at the end of each academic year. The school maintains appropriate links with the local safeguarding partners. Suitable records are kept of any safeguarding concerns, and pupils for whom the safeguarding team has concerns are monitored regularly. Pupils are fully aware of who they should turn to should they have any concerns. They feel well informed about safeguarding matters and say that the school provides a safe environment. They are confident that the school would act promptly should any concerns arise.
- 2.8 Procedures for checking the suitability of staff have been tightened appropriately. No new member of staff starts work in the school without receipt of suitable references. All new staff are checked against the barred list and, where appropriate, the lists of those prohibited from teaching and from managing schools.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18 and 21]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The school has improved its procedures for checking the suitability of staff before they start work at the school. The school's safer recruitment policy has been revised, and staff responsible for carrying out the various checks now have a suitable understanding of what is required.
- 2.11 At the time of the previous inspection, various checks, in particular the right to work in the UK, qualifications, medical fitness, barred list, prohibition from teaching and prohibition from management, had not been carried out on some existing members of staff. These have all been carried out retrospectively, and the single central register for admissions (SCR) has been updated accordingly. The retrospective checks confirm that all of the school's staff are suitable to work with children.
- 2.12 All staff appointed since the previous inspection have had all of the required checks carried out before they start work. The dates on which checks have been undertaken are recorded accurately in the SCR, and copies of supporting documentation placed in staff files. No new member of staff starts work until a senior leader has verified that all of the required checks have been undertaken.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32]

- 2.13 The school meets the standard.
- 2.14 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.
- 2.15 At the time of the previous inspection, the school did not make available to parents details of its provision for pupils with an education, health and care plan and those with English as an additional language. It also failed to make available particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year. These details are now available to parents of current and prospective pupils on the school's website alongside all of the other information required for this standard.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 The school has rewritten its complaints procedure which now meets all of the requirements for this standard. Although there have been no formal complaints since the previous inspection, the policy now allows for parental complaints, if any, to be handled through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. It allows for records to be kept, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.18 The proprietor, members of the governing body and the school's senior leaders all have a suitable understanding of how complaints should be handled. Minor concerns which have been received since the previous inspection have been logged in line with the school's new policy.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 At the time of the previous inspection, there was a lack of clarity regarding the roles and functions of the proprietor, the headteacher and the advisory governance group, which is now referred to as the governing body. A new leadership structure has been drawn up and implemented, and this makes

clear where various responsibilities lie. Staff benefit from this clarity with regard to lines of responsibility and accountability.

- 2.21 Through training, research and the reading of statutory guidance, the school's leaders have suitably improved their knowledge and understanding of the regulatory requirements and now show skill in ensuring that all of the standards are met and that the well-being of pupils is prioritised. Senior leaders maintain careful oversight of all requirements, and staff have a much greater awareness of the role they have to play in ensuring that the school meets all of the standards.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this visit, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and no further action is required as a result of this visit.

4. Recommendation with regard to material change request

Summary

- 4.1 The school has requested an increase in the maximum number of pupils from 120 to 140. This increase would not involve the creation of any new classes or teaching groups but would be achieved by allowing each year group, from Year 5 to Year 11, to reach a potential maximum of 20 pupils.
- 4.2 This increase would not require any change to the school's curricular provision, teaching arrangements, provision for pupils' personal development or procedures to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school has an adequate number of staff to cope with the increase, and arrangements for checking the suitability of staff now meet requirements.
- 4.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has constructed a new, standalone classroom next to the existing classroom for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The new classroom is of suitable construction, has been confirmed as meeting all current building regulations and is appropriately equipped with the means to detect fire. The addition of this classroom means that the school has sufficient teaching accommodation to cope with the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Recommendation

- 4.4 As the school now meets all of the regulatory requirements and has sufficient and suitable accommodation, it is recommended that the material change request to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 120 to 140 be granted.

5. Summary of evidence

- 5.1 The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor and chair of the governance group. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.