

Inspection of a good school: The Spires College

Westlands Lane, Torquay, Devon TQ1 3PE

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

Outcome

The Spires College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend The Spires College. They are happy and feel safe. Many parents speak highly of the support the school provides. They feel that the school helps pupils grow academically and personally.

Leaders have high expectations for staff and pupils. They have planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Older pupils talk positively about the improvements that have happened while they have attended the school.

Leaders have put in place clear systems to ensure that learning is not disrupted. As a result, low-level disruption in lessons is rare. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere across the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and positive. Bullying is rare. If it occurs, staff deal with it quickly. Pupils trust staff to help them if they have any problems.

Pupils are respectful of differences. They say that they can be themselves when at school. Pupils' attitudes reflect the school value of kindness to others. Many pupils involve themselves in the wide choice of extra-curricular activities on offer. These include a range of sporting activities, drama, languages and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

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

The Spires College is well led and managed. Leaders are determined that every pupil will follow a broad curriculum. They have designed the curriculum so that pupils learn knowledge in a clear sequence. Leaders have carefully considered the most important knowledge that pupils need to remember.

Subject leaders use current educational research about effective teaching to develop their subjects. They support teachers to enable them to deliver the planned curriculum well. As a result, pupils learn the right content in the right order.

The school has developed its approach to assessment. Teachers check pupils' understanding effectively. Teachers respond quickly to correct pupils' misconceptions. They adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind receive the extra help they need to help them to catch up.

Leaders are working to increase the proportion of pupils who choose subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. In particular, they are ambitious to grow the number of pupils studying a modern foreign language at GCSE. The curriculum is now more interesting to pupils. As a result, the number of pupils taking a language is increasing.

Leaders prioritise reading and choose books with care. Pupils use these books well to build their understanding of other cultures. They enjoy the opportunities they have to listen to adults read and to read independently. Pupils who are at the early stage of learning to read are supported well. Specialist teachers deliver a phonics programme. If pupils fall behind, they receive the support they need to catch up. This helps them to build their confidence in reading.

Leaders identify pupils with SEND quickly. They provide useful information to teachers to ensure that these pupils receive the help they need. As a result, pupils are able to access the mainstream curriculum most of the time. The school has two resourced SEND bases. This means there is a high level of expertise in the school. SEND support is effective. Despite this, some parents of pupils with SEND are unclear and unhappy about the support their child receives in school.

Leaders have updated the curriculum for pupils' personal, social and health education. Teachers deliver this curriculum well. They provide pupils with the support they need to build their understanding of protected characteristics and the importance of respecting people from other backgrounds. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive effective careers advice. This helps pupils prepare for the next steps in their education.

Pupils behave well. They show positive attitudes towards their education. Most pupils attend school regularly. Despite this, disadvantaged pupils attend less well than their peers. This hampers the progress they make as they do not benefit fully from the curriculum or from opportunities for wider development.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They hold leaders to account. Staff have high levels of respect for leaders and say they lead by example. School leaders and governors understand the workload pressure on staff. Staff appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training. Staff use this well to identify and report any concerns quickly. Leaders work well with vulnerable pupils and their families to ensure they get the help they need.

Leaders ensure that the school has suitable policies in place to raise awareness among staff and parents about the dangers of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some parents of pupils with SEND are unclear about the way in which the school supports their child. As a result, they are not satisfied with the actions of the school. Leaders need to ensure that parents have a better understanding of, and confidence in, the school's work to support pupils with SEND.
- Disadvantaged pupils attend less well than their peers. Consequently, pupils miss learning and have gaps in their understanding. Leaders need to ensure that the attendance of the pupils who attend less well improves.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

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	113526
Local authority	Torbay
Inspection number	10240125
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Pearson
Headteacher	Alex Newton
Website	www.thespirescollege.com
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has resourced provision for pupils with SEND.
- The school uses four unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of governors and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum

with subject leaders, visited a selection of lessons, met teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss support for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Matthew Collins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Fran Gormley	Ofsted Inspector
John Weeds	Ofsted Inspector

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