

# Torpoint Community College

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 112041             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cornwall           |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310771             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 5–6 December 2007  |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Pauline Robins HMI |

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

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|   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Comprehensive                       |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Foundation                          |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–19                               |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                               |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |                                     |
| School                                    | 988                                 |
| 6th form                                  | 183                                 |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                  |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | David Morton                        |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Andrea Hazeldine                    |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 November 2004                     |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Trevol Road<br>Torpoint<br>PL11 2NH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01752 812511                        |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01752 815014                        |

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Torpoint Community College is of average size and has specialist status in humanities. The majority of students come from the Torpoint and Rame areas of Cornwall. However, approximately 20% of students are from a number of primary schools in the Devonport area of Plymouth. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very slightly above the national average and this has been an increasing trend over the past three years. The percentage of students who have a statement of special educational needs is decreasing and is currently below the national average at 1.9%. The number of students who are from a White British heritage is significantly higher than would be expected nationally and very few learn English as an additional language. Overall, the students' attainment on entry to the college is average though rising. The headteacher is relatively new to the college, having taken up her post in January 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Torpoint is a satisfactory and improving college with some good and outstanding features and there is sufficient evidence to show that the college is well placed to move forward under the current leadership. The relatively new senior management team and the governing body know their college well, although they are overly optimistic in some of their judgements. Many of the systems put in place to monitor and evaluate the college are new and have therefore to demonstrate consistent improvement.

The standards that students reach in the sixth form are above average and their achievement is good; in the rest of the college, standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies between subjects. For example, strengths in science and English are balanced against weaker performance in mathematics. This is also the case in other subjects across the curriculum and reflects the quality of leadership and management at middle leader level. Teaching is good in the sixth form and satisfactory in the rest of the college. Senior managers recognise this as a key issue and have in place appropriate strategies to bring about improvement. They have been hampered by high levels of staff absence due to long-term medical conditions but are prepared to take the necessary hard decisions and robustly challenge poor performance.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. They generally behave well around the college and believe that their opinions are valued. Students told inspectors that they enjoy coming to college and appreciate the opportunities on offer. They feel safe and are exceptionally well cared for in a supportive environment. Most students know the overall level at which they are working but are insufficiently clear about what it is they need to do in order to improve. This is in part due to the fact that the target setting process is still developing, but also to inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking to make it informative and objective.

The headteacher has inherited a college where the fabric of the building is in a very poor state of repair. Some redecoration has taken place but budgetary constraints limit the amount she can hope to achieve. Some areas and facilities are inadequate to meet the needs of the curriculum in the 21st century. Despite this, the curriculum throughout the college is good with outstanding vocational provision at the HMS Raleigh site. The college tailors the curriculum exceptionally well to meet the needs of individual students, including the most vulnerable and disaffected.

Specialist status has enabled the college to develop a number of curriculum initiatives, such as the integrated curriculum in Year 7, the Royal Shakespeare Company training for staff and the offer of three GCSE subjects in English for the most able students. There has also been significant investment in refurbishing the geography department and upgrading the infrastructure in information and communication technology (ICT). The college is engaged in a range of activities which have a positive impact on the local and wider community. For example, links have been made to the Eden Project through geography and science, Year 5 primary pupils are involved in curriculum projects in science and humanities and an increasing number of adults are accessing literacy provision. The college has recognised that the data previously used to set targets in the humanities subjects were insufficiently robust. Targets have now been revised to be suitably challenging.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good standard of education. Students make good progress because they are well taught and encouraged to learn independently. Students told inspectors that they enjoy their sixth form experience very much and appreciate the time and effort teachers give to supporting them. Their good attitudes and behaviour are reflected in the extent to which they voluntarily participate in college and community activities. The college also provides many opportunities for the students to enrich their experience through additional activities and work with other institutions. The sixth form staff have a commitment to ensuring that individual students are appropriately placed on courses and given every opportunity to succeed. The success of this bespoke service demonstrates itself in terms of high retention rates and good results. The head of sixth form is effective in promoting the sixth form, as shown by the rising number of students on roll.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of subject leadership and management, especially in mathematics.
- Improve teaching and learning, including the use of assessment, so that they are consistently good.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation are robust and objective at all levels.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

The 2006 National Curriculum test results for Year 9 students showed satisfactory progress overall. However, in science pupils made good progress and in mathematics progress was inadequate. Test results in 2007 are similar to 2006. Over the past three years the results of Year 11 students in their GCSE examinations have been in line with the national average. When the 2007 results are compared against the students' attainment on entry to the college they show that progress is satisfactory overall. In 2005 and 2006, standards and progress at the end of Year 11 were similar to those in 2007 except in English, where standards are above the national average. In English and science, students consistently make good progress by the end of Year 11. Although progress in mathematics is satisfactory overall, there is clear evidence that a significant number of students are underachieving. For example, in 2007 over one quarter of the students entered for GCSE attained a D grade even though many had reached Level 6 or 7 in National Curriculum tests two years earlier. This represents poor progress. There are also inconsistencies in standards and achievement across non-core subjects. The college met its published targets for Key Stage 3 but fell slightly short of its Key Stage 4 target. The progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with that of their peers.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The college places a strong emphasis on the belief that 'every child matters' and has in place a clear tutorial programme to deliver this. Form periods encourage students to reflect and are a positive start to the day. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as demonstrated through their links to a school in Kenya. Healthy eating is encouraged, vending machines provide healthy snacks and the food at lunchtime is nutritious and enjoyed by students. Students are mostly conscientious, hard-working and well behaved. Although some parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour through the questionnaire, this was not apparent during the inspection. Inspectors did see some low-level disruption in the weaker lessons, where students were not being effectively engaged in their learning. However, students usually behave well in classrooms and around the college. Students feel safe in the college and are aware of where they can turn to for help, including peer mentors. They told inspectors that there is little bullying and any incidents are dealt with effectively. This was an opinion shared by some parents. Students participate well in college and community activities, and particularly appreciate the extra-curricular opportunities available. An important factor preventing students' personal development being more successful is attendance. The college is dealing with attendance issues conscientiously and with growing effectiveness. Unauthorised absence is low but authorised absence is above average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

There are examples of good and outstanding teaching, but too much is unsatisfactory. Strong features of the good lessons are the quality of planning, clarity of explanations and good relationships with the students. Good questioning challenges the students and allows them to develop their own thoughts. Students are engaged, well behaved and interact well with each other, respecting each other's ideas and opinions. However, in a number of lessons, the planning does not take account of students' needs, learning outcomes are not clear and the students do not have the opportunity to work independently; these factors affect the progress they make. Some students felt that their lessons lacked challenge and were too worksheet based. This may also be due to the incidence of long-term absence and the use of temporary teachers. In one ICT lesson, the students were unable to progress because of changes in cover staff. The resource coordinator was able to use her expertise to assist in this lesson, and this is a strength for the department. Although most students know or can find their targets, many do not know how to achieve them. The quality of the marking of students' work is inconsistent and this is another key factor that hinders them in understanding what it is they need to do in order to improve.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is very firmly based on the needs of the students. A good example of this is the integrated humanities, ICT and English (using a phonics programme) curriculum designed for a specific group of Year 7 students who have been identified as having weaker literacy skills. Early indications show that this is leading to an increase in self-confidence and raising reading ages. A wide range of academic, vocational and applied courses is available for Years 9 to 13. The vocational centre at HMS Raleigh is an excellent facility, providing first class training to students from the college and currently four Plymouth schools together with independent adult learners. Students are identified early for some of these programmes. The college has developed strong links with outside providers to develop a curriculum matched to the needs of the individual. It is also actively engaged in developing the new diploma qualifications. The senior leadership team recognizes that not all learners are fully engaged in their learning, and is particularly looking at ways to improve the setting arrangements. These activities are instrumental in enhancing the provision for learning and building good relationships between the students themselves, and with teachers and the wider community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

There is a strong commitment to care for and support all students in a safe and secure learning environment. Form tutors play a central role in promoting the personal development and well-being of students. The continuity of the tutorial system and the daily contact contribute well to the effectiveness of the pastoral care provided. Vulnerable students and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties are well supported through the student support centre. Specialist teachers and external agencies further contribute to the high quality of inclusive care at the college. Safeguarding procedures are robust and regularly reviewed. There are well established induction arrangements for students joining the college. Students are well informed about courses and vocational routes. Target setting is not sufficiently specific to each subject to ensure students are given challenging grades and levels to work towards. The college has recently developed an appropriate system for tracking students' progress against target levels and grades. When combined with more challenging targets, this means that the college should be able to identify and address underachievement at an earlier stage.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The headteacher and her deputy care passionately about the future success of the college and are rightly challenging complacency. Together with other developing senior managers, they have put in place robust and effective systems to monitor the performance of the college. However, many of these systems are relatively new and it is too soon to be able to measure their impact on achievement and standards. Leadership and management in other areas of the college lack consistency; there is some good practice but also some that fails to bring about

the necessary improvement. Managers at all levels have yet to understand the need to challenge consistently and with impartiality.

Rigorous systems have been put in place to improve, monitor and track the quality of teaching and learning. Again, it is too early to judge the impact of these measures. For example, the staff are being encouraged to share expertise in both the planning and delivery of lessons through peer coaching. Staff are also being supported to understand that the quality of lessons is reflected in students' progress.

Governors acknowledge that they are going through a period of change and development. Since the appointment of the headteacher, they feel better informed and know the questions they need to ask in order to hold the college to account. They also welcome the headteacher's restructuring of the governing body and the formation of a core Strategy and Finance committee. This is effective and focuses decision making in the context of the college's budgetary constraints.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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? | 3   | 2   |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection  | Yes | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?   | 2   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 2   | 2   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 3 | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 3 |   |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |   |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 3 |   |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |   |
| The behaviour of learners   | 2 |   |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community                                    | 2 |   |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |   |

### The quality of provision

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?          | 3 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 3   | 2   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3   |     |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 3   |     |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 3   |     |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 3   |     |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 3   |     |
| 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  |     |

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

7 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Torpoint Community College, Torpoint, PL11 2NH

Thank you for welcoming us to your college. We very much enjoyed talking to you about your work and gathering your views. This letter is to tell you about our findings.

We have judged Torpoint to be a satisfactory and improving college with some good and even some outstanding features. We were impressed by the curriculum you are offered, particularly the vocational provision at HMS Raleigh. We found behaviour around the college to be good and you told us that you feel safe and your opinions are valued. The sixth form provision is good and enables students to achieve well.

Your headteacher and the senior managers already recognise that there are areas to be improved and we have agreed that these are the things that need to be addressed.

- Improve the quality of subject leadership and management, especially in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of assessment, so that it is consistently good in all subjects.
- Make sure that all leaders and managers use monitoring and evaluation systems consistently well.

However, every member of the college community needs to work together and you have an important part to play in supporting the staff to bring about these improvements. One way you can achieve this is by improving your attendance; if you are not in college then you are missing out on valuable learning.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins HMI



7 December 2007

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Pauline Robins  
HMI