

# Inspection of The Lodestar Academy

South Parks Road, Torquay, Devon TQ2 8JE

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Inspection dates: 21 and 22 November 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Steven Hulme. This school is part of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT), which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stuart Gardner, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gerard Newman.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The welfare of pupils and their families is at the heart of The Lodestar Academy. All pupils who arrive at this alternative provision are warmly welcomed. This means they soon settle into school life. Pupils get the care and support they need to overcome challenges. They receive individual guidance to help them to learn. As a result, many pupils swiftly gain new confidence and self-esteem which helps them to achieve well.

The school has high expectations for how pupils will behave and what they will achieve. Pupils know what is expected of them during lessons and social times. Any conflicts are calmed quickly. Pupils swiftly learn how to respect themselves and each other.

The school offers excellent pastoral support to pupils and their families. There is a nurturing environment for pupils to learn. Pupils enjoy warm relationships with adults and soon develop a strong sense of belonging. They refer to the school as being like 'a little family.' They are confident that they can share any worries or concerns. They trust that the school will listen and act promptly. This helps them to feel safe.

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

The school focuses on supporting each pupil. It wants them to become confident learners and responsible citizens. The aspiration is for every pupil to experience success.

Pupils arrive with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Many pupils have complex needs. On arrival, the school checks what pupils know and can do to ensure that provision is in place to meet each pupil's learning, social and emotional needs.

The school has an ambitious curriculum. They know that some pupils only stay for a short while. They want pupils to gain knowledge and skills to use in their next school or college. Staff are determined that pupils will achieve well regardless of how long they stay. Pupils work towards a range of qualifications, including GCSEs in English and mathematics, and achieve success. However, the school recognises that although pupils are fluent readers, they are reluctant to read or write. They do not read for enjoyment or to support their learning. They do not always demonstrate in their written work the knowledge they gain.

School leaders ensure the environment is well resourced and looked after. Pupils benefit from some great amenities, including a science laboratory and an art room. This helps pupils to have the same learning experiences as those in mainstream schools.

The school works tirelessly with parents to promote good attendance. It provides support and guidance where required. Consequently, pupils' attendance is continuing to improve. Where there are concerns, school leaders take decisive action to challenge poor attendance.

The school expects all pupils to abide by its five character values, which include courage and comradeship. These values support pupils to develop good learning behaviours, improve their self-image and increase confidence.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is planned carefully. Pupils gain the knowledge they need to lead healthy and successful lives. They learn about the importance of treating everyone with respect. Pupils welcome the therapies the school offers, which include the Apricot Centre and the Donkey Sanctuary. These opportunities help pupils improve their mental health and well-being. Pupils appreciate having Bramble, the therapy dog, around. They comment on how he helps to calm them down following moments of anxiety or distress.

Pupils have a voice, and staff listen and consider their views, for example, in the design of their uniforms. This gives pupils a sense of purpose and pride.

The school provides helpful careers guidance and support to ensure pupils are well prepared for their next steps. They do not put a ceiling on pupils' aspirations. Pupils successfully go on to college, university or secure an apprenticeship.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Pupils' writing is not well developed across the curriculum. As a result, they do not demonstrate what they have learned in their written work. The school must ensure that pupils develop their writing across all areas of the curriculum.
- Pupils are reluctant readers. They do not enjoy reading to support their learning or for pleasure. The school should ensure that pupils better understand the importance of reading for both learning and enjoyment.

## **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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144031
<b>Local authority</b>	Torbay
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288220
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision sponsored
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	47
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gerard Newman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steven Hulme
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lodestaracademy.org.uk">www.lodestaracademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 to 12 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Lodestar Academy joined The Thinking Schools Academy Trust in September 2023.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and staff.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the regional director of TSAT.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and PSHE. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke with the head of education, learning and skills from Torbay local authority and an external school improvement partner.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered key documentation, including school improvement plans and governors' and trustees' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The lead inspector met with school leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey, Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including free-text replies. Inspectors spoke with parents during the day.

### **Inspection team**

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tonya Hill

Ofsted Inspector

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