

King Edward VI Community College

Ashburton Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5JX

Inspection dates

12–13 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in almost all subjects. By the end of Year 11, they attain above-average GCSE results and have made good progress from their starting points in both English and mathematics.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs, or are in receipt of additional government funding, achieve well.
- Teaching is routinely good and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Teachers have high expectations of students and plan an interesting range of tasks that meet the needs of the various groups of students.
- Students enjoy their college life and behave well in lessons and around the college. They are confident, articulate and read widely. They say there is little bullying, any which occurs generally being handled well.
- College leaders analyse data effectively and have brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection. Teachers' performance is managed well, leading to improved teaching and student achievement.
- The curriculum is a notable strength. Students enjoy the wide range and variety of courses and activities.
- The sixth form is of good quality and is improving rapidly. Results at AS level in 2013 were well above average, reflecting increasingly good teaching.
- The governing body has a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and is effective in challenging college leaders to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching meets the needs of groups of students, but it is not always refined to challenge each individual. The quality of marking is not consistently effective in helping students to improve.
- A minority of parents lack confidence in the college leadership because they believe that mechanisms for consultation and communication are weak.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the teaching of 50 teachers. The majority of these observations were carried out jointly with senior or middle leaders. Inspectors also reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the governing body, and telephone conversations were held with a representative of the local authority.
- The views of 197 parents who submitted them on the Ofsted 'Parent View' website, and of 45 staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account. A number of emails, letters and telephone calls from parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sylvie Trevenna	Additional Inspector
Justine Hocking	Additional Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional Inspector
Terry Payne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The college is larger than the average secondary school. It serves the town of Totnes and the surrounding area. The number of students has fallen by around 20% since the last inspection.
- The college is a single trust cooperative school; the trust is named the 'Dart Valley Learning Trust'. It is also a member of a Teaching School Alliance, in which local schools work together to improve the quality of their teaching.
- The college was formerly designated as a performing arts college and continues to place a major emphasis on these aspects of the curriculum, including through the provision of advanced courses in dance.
- The number of students supported through school action is broadly average, while the proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is below average. These students have a wide range of difficulties including profound physical or learning disabilities.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of families in the armed services.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, in English and mathematics.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 pursue courses at South Devon College. The college also uses a range of local authority provision for the education of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, or who have serious long-term illnesses.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that work is better planned to meet the needs of individual students
 - improving the consistency of the marking of work and of feedback to students to help them to improve
 - improving the resources available to students and teachers, especially for science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Improve the effectiveness of the college's partnership with parents by:
 - enabling staff, governors, parents and where appropriate students to work together when planning major changes within the college
 - ensuring that parents receive a timely and appropriate response to individual enquiries.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Over the past three years students' attainment at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form has improved steadily. In English, above average attainment has been sustained while in mathematics, attainment has improved rapidly and is now also above average. In both these subjects, the proportions of students making or exceeding the progress expected of them in Years 7 to 11 is also greater than the national average.
- Subjects where attainment is notably high at both GCSE and A level include physics, biology, chemistry, art and design and religious education (RE). Attainment is also high at A level in mathematics and dance. In all these subjects, the proportions attaining the highest grades A* and A are above average. In recent years, attainment in modern foreign languages has been below average.
- Scrutiny of current students' work and of the college's records of their progress shows that the great majority are now making good progress in almost all subjects, including in modern foreign languages.
- Students read widely and have good literacy skills. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, students of average ability asked thoughtful and detailed questions about the Doppler effect and its impact on the perceived colour of stars. Students also have good skills of numeracy and ICT, although in the latter case their access to suitable, up-to-date equipment across a range of subjects is limited.
- The college has built on its previous specialism in the performing arts and inspectors observed work of very high quality in sixth form dance lessons. The visual arts are also a growing strength with outstanding work seen in drawing, painting and textiles.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make good progress, in some cases from a very low starting point. A parent explained how her child had been encouraged to give a presentation to teaching staff concerning 'dyslexia from a learner's viewpoint', which had greatly improved her self-confidence.
- Students in receipt of the pupil premium also make good progress, which is monitored very effectively by staff. Gaps in their performance when compared with other students are smaller than found on average and are closing. For example, for Year 11 in 2012, the proportion of these students gaining five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics increased by 40%, bringing their attainment closer to both the national average and that of other students in the college. The catch-up funding for Year 7 students is used effectively to improve literacy skills.
- Other groups of students, such as boys and girls and the small number of minority ethnicity, also make equally good progress in their learning. The overall attainment of students when entering Year 7 is declining due to a number of factors. Senior leaders are aware of this and have rightly introduced strategies to ensure that students' literacy and other skills develop rapidly.
- The college has phased out the former policy of entering students for GCSE before the end of Year 11. Most recently this was used in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers routinely have high expectations of what students can achieve. They have very good subject knowledge and plan tasks appropriate for the groups of students within the class. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for learning to students, who are positive about the teaching they receive.
- Students' work and the college's records show that they make steadily good progress, showing that teaching has been good over a period of time. This was also the case where, for example, the teacher was unavoidably absent during the inspection.
- Almost all lessons are conducted at a good pace, with a variety of tasks that keep students

motivated. Questioning is used well, and techniques such as asking students to display their answers on a small whiteboard ensure all are involved and enable the teacher to check the understanding of each student.

- Teachers place an appropriately high emphasis on developing students' skills of literacy and numeracy, and on their abilities to learn independently and in groups. For example, all Year 7 students follow a programme of individual reading which is developing both their literacy and their knowledge.
- Teachers use strategies such as role play very effectively, for example when Year 12 law students took on various roles in a mock enquiry. This was an example of the very good teaching found in the sixth form.
- Students receiving school action plus or with statements of special educational need are taught particularly well as lessons are planned to meet the specific needs of individual students. This practice is not found as frequently in other lessons and, for example, sometimes students have periods of inactivity when they finish a task quickly. Support staff are effective in helping these students to learn more quickly.
- Teachers are supplied with high quality data on students' progress and most are beginning to use this well to plan tasks and to identify where additional help is needed. Students are aware of the grades they are capable of achieving and of their current performance, and are beginning to understand how to get from one to the other.
- The college has recently introduced a new marking policy and where this is used effectively, students receive good feedback and have the opportunity to respond to the teacher's comments, improving their achievement. In some subjects, the use of this policy is more patchy and some of the marking is superficial.
- Teachers use the available resources well, but there are some limitations. Some aspects, such as performing arts and the library, have excellent resources but there are few tablet computers and some accommodation is of poor quality. For example, some laboratories are poorly equipped, limiting the range of investigations that can be undertaken.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well both in lessons and around the college. No examples were observed of poor behaviour inhibiting learning.
- The college's records show that behaviour is routinely good. Exclusions, both permanent and fixed-term, are considerably lower than national averages. The wide range of students who spoke with inspectors said they were unaware of significant bullying, including through the use of electronic media. They are aware of the dangers of this, as well as of other misuse of the internet. This indicates the college's success in developing positive relationships.
- College leaders monitor the behaviour, safety and progress of students educated at alternative provision, ensuring that this provision is of suitable quality. Data show that these students make good progress and that the provision is effective.
- Students enjoy college life and say that teaching has improved significantly in the recent past. They also say that all students, including, for example, those who are disabled, receive equal treatment, reflecting the college's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and challenging discrimination.
- Students' attendance is average, and a range of strategies is used to improve it. These include discouragement of holidays in college time, immediate response to absence and rewards for good attendance.
- The site is large, with three areas of classrooms located some distance apart. One of these involves crossing a busy main road, which students do in a safe and orderly fashion using the footbridge provided. However, the lengthy walks involved lead to some students arriving at lessons late, although a five-minute movement time is allowed between each lesson.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors have rightly placed their highest priority on improving the weaknesses in teaching identified at the last inspection. This has been very successful and the quality of teaching, and hence students' achievements, has improved significantly. More specific issues have been identified and tackled, such as rectifying weakness in modern foreign language teaching and by taking a more rigorous approach to sixth form leadership, which has led to rapid improvement. The sixth form is now a strength of the college.
- Improved teaching has been brought about in a number of ways including more rigorous management of performance, better professional development including through the Teaching Alliance partnership and the appointment of advanced skills teachers. Subject leadership has improved, as confirmed by their good analysis of teaching quality following joint observations with inspectors.
- The curriculum is another area of strength. Students commented on the wide range of opportunities they are offered, for example in the performing arts, in sport and physical education, and for adventurous activities such as the 'Ten Tors Challenge'. This range of activities reflects the college's success in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students also value the choices they are offered and the guidance they receive in making them, including when making decisions about work or education after college. The proportion of leavers not in education, employment or training is well below average.
- The college has developed a sophisticated approach to the analysis of data which enables students' progress to be monitored very effectively, including that of groups of students such as those in receipt of the pupil premium or placed at alternative provision. This work is now having a positive impact on students' achievements.
- The local authority provided an appropriate level of good quality support for a satisfactory school, which rightly reduced when the college was correctly assessed to be good.
- In the summer of 2012 leaders and governors proposed that school uniform be reintroduced for Years 7 to 11. They acknowledge that lessons have been learned from the way that the consultation was handled. Some parents, mainly because of this matter, continue to lack confidence in the college's leadership and governance. The college has a highly informative and useful website and its general information for parents is of good quality, but a small minority of parents complain that individual enquiries are not always handled in a timely and appropriate manner. Inspectors found that there was evidence to support this view.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses, based partly on the high quality data provided by senior leaders which gives them a good understanding of students' achievement. They challenge effectively, leading to positive change. Governors have a good understanding of how teachers' performance is monitored and how their responsibilities are linked to pay. They benefit from useful recent training and monitor the use of resources such as the pupil premium and their public statement on the impact of this is detailed and of good quality. They are aware of the resource implications of the reduction in the number of students on roll and have planned well for this, maintaining staff morale. They value the college's membership of the Dart Valley Learning Cooperative Trust and rightly plan to give its development a higher priority, including by encouraging the membership of parents. Governors acknowledge that, like other stakeholder groups, they were divided over the introduction of uniform, but it is clear that they are now working effectively together for the future good of the college and its students, demonstrating the college's capacity for further improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	113520
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	426788

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1450
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rick Gaehl
Principal	Kate Mason
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2011
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