

South Dartmoor Community College

Balland Lane, Ashburton, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ13 7EW

Inspection dates 13–14 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good, and often very good, progress. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, exceeds the national average and is increasing.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Individual students' needs are very well understood and skilled support is quickly put in place when needed.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Lessons are well planned and many include a wide variety of activities.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The sixth form is good. Its students make good progress and reach high standards of attainment. A high proportion of students enter university each year.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding, in lessons and around the school. Students are polite and considerate, and have excellent, respectful relationships with staff.
- School leaders have been very successful in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. They have taken strong action to improve standards and have clear plans in place to produce further improvements.
- Governors are effective and show a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- All groups of students do not make equally rapid progress. Although the progress of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is increasing, it is not yet equal to that of other students.
- Achievement in English and mathematics is not consistently outstanding.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 52 lessons, of which 11 were jointly observed with a member of the school’s leadership team. Inspectors visited an assembly, tutor groups and other learning activities.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of students, talked with students around the school and scrutinised samples of students’ work.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, other staff with leadership responsibilities, two members of the governing body and two members of the board of directors of the academy trust. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- A variety of school documentation was examined, including the school’s records of current student progress, examination results for 2013, self-evaluation summaries and improvement plans, behaviour and attendance logs, records relating to safeguarding and those relating to the management of staff performance.
- Inspectors took account of the questionnaires completed by 38 staff, together with 127 responses submitted to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and one letter from a parent.

Inspection team

Sean Thornton, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Bowles	Additional Inspector
Colin Money	Additional Inspector
Marian Prior	Additional Inspector
Ann Sydney	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school and has a large sixth form.
- A lower than average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals. Almost all these students in this school are those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds and the proportion of students whose first language is not English is much below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of these students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school includes a specialist resource base for eight students who display autistic spectrum disorders.
- About 30 students are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for its students.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- South Dartmoor Community College converted to become an academy in April 2011. When its predecessor school, also called South Dartmoor Community College, was last inspected in May 2010, it was judged to be outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, by:
 - making sure that all teachers give high quality feedback to students, enabling them to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, and providing them with time to respond so all groups of students make equally rapid progress
 - ensuring that the good practice present in the college, relating to pace, challenge and questioning, is shared among all teachers
 - making sure that all teachers provide students with many opportunities to be actively involved in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with attainment that is equal to the national average. The proportion that gains five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, at the end of Year 11 is above average and the school's unvalidated information indicates that in 2013 the school achieved its best ever GCSE results.
- Students make good progress from their starting points in almost all their subjects. The progress of boys in core subjects is equal to that of girls.
- The school carries out detailed analyses of students' examination results. In 2012, school leaders realised that some groups of students were not making rapid enough progress in mathematics and that achievement was lagging behind that in English. The school took strong action and its own records for 2013 show that this intervention has brought about significant improvement.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress from their starting points and show strong overall achievement. Many reach high standards of attainment which enable them to enter university across a wide variety of institutions and courses.
- The school's tracking systems focus closely on the progress of all groups of students towards ambitious targets and show that progress across all key stages is strong.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well provided for in lessons, with individual learning plans and behaviour support plans. In 2012 the progress made by some students supported at school action plus was slower than that of others. By paying greater attention to the needs of this small group of students the school has ensured that more of them are now making progress in line with their peers. Students who display autistic spectrum disorders are effectively supported during lessons so that they make good progress in their communication skills and gain worthwhile qualifications at the end of Year 11.
- More-able students make good progress by the end of Year 11, as shown by high numbers gaining GCCSE grades A* and A in many subjects.
- The school makes very good use of the pupil premium funding to increase the rates of progress of eligible students. Additional support includes an individual mentor, small-group teaching and a summer transition camp. In 2012, Year 11 results showed that eligible students made less progress than their peers and that attainment in English and mathematics was almost one grade less than that of other students in the school. The school's data show that in 2013 these gaps are reducing and that impact in Key Stage 3 is having an increasing effect on improving the rates of progress of these students.
- The school is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all its students and supports fully the progress of all groups.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is being used to provide one-to-one teaching in English and mathematics as well as to fund extra small groups and extra pastoral support. The entitled students are now catching up with their peers.
- The school has revised its policy on early entry to GCSE examinations. This is now used only for very able students in mathematics, all of whom gain grades A* or A, and then progress to the free-standing qualification in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. Effective systems monitor the quality of teaching and are supported by good training and development.
- The Principal has taken rigorous actions to improve teaching, and staff share a drive to make their teaching outstanding.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They set high expectations and show enthusiasm for their subjects, and students respond well to the tasks provided for them.

- In the best lessons, teachers ensure that work is provided at the right levels for all students, give them many opportunities for working independently, probe understanding with open questioning and maintain a good pace. For example, in an outstanding music lesson, students were provided with an introduction on African rhythms and then worked cooperatively in groups producing percussion compositions. They were all supported by well-chosen questioning and then promptly carried out assessment of other groups' work.
- Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are missed to give students time to think for themselves and work independently. During questioning and discussion work, students are sometimes not given enough time to consider their answer or collaborate with others. In some of these lessons pace is not maintained and the level of challenge is not high enough for all members of the class.
- There is a strong drive to improve literacy across all subjects and a senior leader has been appointed to strengthen this programme, since currently there are some inconsistencies between subjects. Initiatives have also been introduced among a number of subjects to coordinate the development of mathematical skills.
- Some teachers mark students' work regularly, and in detail, encouraging students to take responsibility by involving them in assessment and giving them clear advice on how to improve. However, this good practice is not consistent and in many classes marking is brief, lacks detail and does not involve students in the ongoing assessment and improvement process. Students report that they would welcome greater consistency in the marking of their work.
- The good standard of teaching observed in the main school is also found in the sixth form. For example, in an outstanding Year 12 information technology lesson, students used a variety of modelling techniques to investigate methods of communication across the world. Following clear explanations from the teacher, students worked with enthusiasm in teams, engaged in mature discussions and extended their own learning. However, there is variation between subjects in the quality of sixth form teaching and not enough is outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students show great courtesy and respect to one another, and to all adults, as they move around the school. They are punctual for their lessons, moving purposely between the different parts of this large school site.
- Students' outstanding behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning and personal development. Students pay close attention in lessons, follow instructions carefully, share their own ideas and listen respectfully to the views of others. They respond well to opportunities to be actively involved in their lessons.
- Teachers are skilled in managing students' behaviour and they follow consistent policies so that students know there are high expectations. The behaviour of students with autistic spectrum disorders is managed well by their teachers and teaching assistants who are trained to respond to their needs.
- Students feel safe in school and the curriculum supports them well in learning how to stay safe. They have a good understanding of e-safety, including how to avoid unsafe websites.
- Students report that incidents of all types of bullying, including cyber bullying, are rare and are dealt with swiftly by the school's staff. A group of students are trained to form a students' support group to offer help to any of their peers who are bullied or have personal problems. The vertical tutor groups encourage older students to help those who are younger and sixth form students act as very positive role models.
- The school promotes good relations and will not tolerate any form of discrimination. This is reinforced for students during anti-bullying weeks.
- School councils enable students to express their views and bring about school improvement. Students also play very active roles in raising large amounts of money for worthwhile charities of their choice.
- Students' attendance is above average and is improving.

- The frequency of exclusions is below average and is decreasing because of the systems that the school has in place to deal promptly with any inappropriate behaviour.
- The large majority of parents and carers who expressed a view considered that behaviour is managed well. They also said that their children are happy at school and feel safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership of the school is outstanding and is founded on the Principal's commitment that all students will benefit from outstanding teaching.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and areas for development of the school and this is used well to inform an excellent school improvement plan. This detailed planning, which is regularly reviewed, is resulting in continuous improvement. The school's own information on current student progress shows that improvement strategies are having an increased impact and indicates further achievement at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers with leadership responsibilities work very effectively to make sure that the quality of teaching is good or outstanding in their areas of responsibility. They act quickly to provide support if students are not making rapid progress.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective. The progress of all students is monitored closely and steps are taken to improve weaker subject areas. Students benefit from good guidance on their destinations and many go on to valuable university courses.
- Robust systems link teachers' performance to training and support, and staff are held to account for their contributions to students' progress. Salary progression takes place only when merited by sustained good performance.
- The curriculum is constantly being evaluated and refined to ensure a suitable range of courses, fully meeting the needs of all students, so they make increasingly strong progress. Older students benefit from the provision of a range of high quality work-related courses. Students also have many opportunities to benefit from an exceptionally wide range of activities outside the normal school day, including sports, music and drama.
- Students receive very good careers information throughout the school so that they are able to make informed decisions about their futures.
- The school provides excellent opportunities to support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These include the wide variety of extra-curricular activities, visits, including international trips, and partnerships with schools in other countries, including Thailand. During the inspection all Year 7 students were involved in work celebrating Diwali.
- All aspects of safeguarding are fully met. Specific guidance and support are provided for staff who work with students displaying autistic spectrum disorders.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. School leaders make use of external review and support in order to secure improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body contributes fully to the vision, planning and checking of the school's work. Senior leaders provide information about the school, including about students' progress and the quality of teaching, which is scrutinised and challenged by governors. The governing body's detailed knowledge of the school enables it to effectively hold school leaders, including the Principal, to account. Governors receive regular training on issues such as safeguarding and regulations regarding teachers' pay and performance. They carefully monitor the use of the pupil premium and other specific funding to make sure that it is used effectively. Governors are involved in decisions about the management of teachers' performance and pay, and how pay increases are related to students' progress. They also know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. Governors make sure that financial resources are managed effectively and that safeguarding meets all statutory requirements.

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	136569
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	412059

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1,650
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graeme Cock
Principal	Hugh Bellamy
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01364 652230
Fax number	01364 654069
Email address	enquiries@southdartmoor.deven.sch.uk

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