

Stoke Damerel Community College

Somerset Place, Stoke, Plymouth, PL3 4BD

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs and those who are supported through additional government funding.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of students and typically plan lessons well.
- Behaviour is good. Students have good attitudes to learning and conduct themselves well when outside of lessons.
- Students understand how to keep themselves safe and what to do when problems arise.
- The headteacher is an inspirational leader. She has developed a strong learning ethos in which all staff strive continuously to improve students' achievement. As a result, teaching has improved and rates of progress are accelerating rapidly.
- Governors are effective in checking the quality of the school and the progress students make. This has helped raise students' achievement.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is strong. Students thrive in a warm family atmosphere.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and many go on to university.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of cases, marking does not give clear enough guidance on how students should improve their work.
- On occasions, teachers do not plan work at the right level to ensure that students are challenged to achieve as well as they can.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons, of which eight were jointly observed with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and case studies. They noted the frequency and quality of marking.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 69 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the school's own data on students' current progress, monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

John Mallone, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frances Ashworth	Additional Inspector
Richard Butler	Additional Inspector
Noureddin Khassal	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Stoke Damerel Community College is a larger than average sized secondary school.
- Stoke Damerel Community College converted to become an academy on 1 April 2011. When its predecessor school, also called Stoke Damerel Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The headteacher is a National Leader of Education.
- Most students are White British. The number of students from a minority ethnic background is small and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs and are supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of students supported through additional government funding known as the pupil premium is high. This funding provides support for children in the care of the local authority, service children and for those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has places for ten students in a specialist unit for those with autism.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for the education of its students.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently plan work at the right level for the different groups of students in their classes so that it is neither too hard or too easy
 - ensuring that in all classes, students are consistently given clear advice on how to improve their work when it is marked.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are well below average. They make good progress so that by the time they take their GCSE examinations, their attainment is close to the national average. In 2013, over half the students obtained five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Students currently in the school are making much faster progress. They are securely on track to attain above the national average in 2014 for the proportion gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving rapidly. In the past, students have not made the progress that is expected of them. Students are now achieving better because of the closer tracking of their progress and improved teaching. In 2014, inspection evidence clearly indicates that a third of all grades at A and AS level are likely to be A* to B. Moreover, over three quarters of all entries to BTEC programmes are on track to result in merits or distinctions.
- The most able students currently in the school are making good progress, although this was not the case in 2013. In mathematics, they have been entered early for their GCSE examinations, allowing them to continue their studies at a faster rate, taking additional qualifications in further mathematics and statistics. This has supported their development as mathematicians and enabled them more easily to move on to advanced-level study.
- Those who are disabled or have special educational needs make better progress than similar students nationally. More than half of those students currently in Years 10 and 11 are expected to gain five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. Students who receive support from staff in the specialist autism unit make good progress in their studies.
- Students who are supported through additional funding have not always historically achieved as well as their peers in school. In 2013, on average they were half a grade behind their classmates in GCSE English examinations and in GCSE mathematics, the gap was almost a grade. These gaps are similar to those found nationally. However, the progress of those students currently in the school is accelerating, especially in mathematics, so that the gap is closing. Students in Years 7 and 8 are progressing as well as their peers in both subjects.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their classmates.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to support those who enter the school with attainment in English and mathematics that is below expectations so that most make good progress by the end of the year.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of students who know that they are in school to learn.
- Students make good progress because knowledgeable teachers very carefully plan lessons that engage their interest. Teachers make good use of resources to support learning. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson on complex sentences, the teacher referred to a list of connecting words displayed on the wall which students also had in front of them. As a result, they were able to focus on what would help them write better and they all produced effective examples of complex sentences.
- Most teachers use information about students' current performance to plan lessons which effectively extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. The most able students are typically given work which engages and challenges them. However, in a few instances, teachers do not consistently plan for the differing levels of ability in their classes.

- Students learn well because teachers use questioning effectively to check their understanding. Teachers modify their plans and maintain students' engagement in lessons. Students make good progress as a result of strong relationships and teachers' enthusiasm which help make lessons enjoyable.
- In some lessons, 'Lead Learners' act as teachers. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson one student gave a presentation on how to discuss language, structure and form when writing about texts. As a result, students had a better understanding of these concepts and were able to apply the terms correctly when doing their own textual analysis.
- Teachers regularly set homework which helps students consolidate and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. Marking is mostly of good quality but in a small minority of cases, teachers do not indicate clearly or consistently enough how students can improve their work.
- The use of highly qualified teaching assistants is good. They focus closely on identified students who make much faster progress as a result. Those working in the autism unit have specialist training and provide strong support for students.
- All teachers track the progress of students who receive the pupil premium and those who are disabled or have special educational needs. The support programmes for these students ensure they make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students have good attitudes to learning, including in the sixth form. They work well together and are respectful towards teachers and other adults. As a result they make good progress in lessons. Low-level disruption is uncommon and occurs only on the few occasions when teaching is insufficiently engaging.
- When outside lessons, students are polite and respectful towards one another and towards adults. Although there are parts of the school where large numbers move through narrow spaces, they conduct themselves sensibly so that they get to lessons on time.
- Students are well prepared and bring the right equipment to lessons.
- Students care for the school environment; there is no litter or graffiti and wall displays are treated with respect.
- The ethos of the school is very positive. There is a strong sense of collaboration and students and staff are united in their desire to learn and improve. Students are justifiably proud of their school and their achievements.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.
- Bullying is uncommon and is quickly and effectively dealt with. Instances of racist and homophobic bullying are extremely rare. Students have a good understanding of what bullying is and know who they can turn to if it occurs.
- The school manages those who behave less well very effectively. Exclusion rates are low compared with other schools nationally and are falling. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years.
- Attendance is better than that of similar schools nationally and is improving as the result of recent measures taken by the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is an inspirational and outstanding leader. She has created a culture of learning which permeates the whole school. She has a very clear understanding of the strengths and needs of the school and how to move it forward.
- Senior and subject leaders are united in their commitment to raising standards. They closely monitor the progress of each student and put in place effective support for those who are falling

behind. As a result, the progress of all students is accelerating rapidly, in particular those who are supported through additional government funding.

- The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with how the school teaches and looks after their children. Students enjoy their schooling and many take advantage of the extra-curricular opportunities.
- There is a robust system in place for setting targets for teachers. Teachers are well supported by the individually tailored training they receive. This leads to clear improvement in classroom practice. When teachers do not meet their targets, pay rises are withheld.
- The school's curriculum is well matched to the needs of students. The three main pathways offer academic studies, a mixture of the academic and practical, and vocational programmes. Students receive expert and impartial advice and guidance on their choice of course. As a result of the focus on individual students' needs and aptitudes, almost all students remain in education or move on to training or employment at the end of Year 11.
- The work of the autism unit is well managed leading to good outcomes for students who receive its support.
- The school works effectively to raise standards of literacy. Initiatives to address this across all subjects have contributed to the increased proportion of students making the progress expected of them in English. The school works well to promote reading, for example by encouraging students to read in assemblies and tutor time as well as through the many activities in the library.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is promoted across the curriculum and in activities outside formal lessons. Students have a strong sense of right and wrong and many subjects explore this directly. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson students were asked to consider the moral implications of decisions taken during the Cuban missile crisis.
- Many older students act as mentors to younger students, for example by giving up their time after school to help them with reading and mathematics. More than 100 students from Year 8 to Year 13 work in local primary schools to support the teaching of sports. The school is one of only 20 in the country to be part of the Prime Minister's Dementia Project, which seeks to raise awareness and understanding of the condition.
- Students take part in highly acclaimed drama productions. The school offers numerous sports and outdoor activities, including a Combined Cadet Force link with a local independent school for Year 10 and Year 11 students. Students have played sport at regional and national levels and some go on to become professionals.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and there is no evidence of any discrimination.
- The school supports the training of teachers by running a programme in local primary schools to train teachers to be outstanding, and as a member of the Schools Direct programme working in local secondary schools. This helps develop the skills of the school's own teachers as well as offering a valuable resource for the city.
- The school is particularly effective at working with parents. More than 130 parents of Year 11 students attended a recent event to inform them about work in mathematics. This has resulted in parents being better able to support their children's progress in the subject.
- Leaders show a strong capacity to improve. Bespoke training has led to improvements in teaching and increased rates of progress for students, especially those who receive the pupil premium. Work on behaviour management has reduced levels of exclusion and contributed to an improvement in attendance.
- The School Improvement Partner has provided helpful support for the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school's relentless drive to improve students' achievement. They effectively challenge the use of the school budget, especially the additional funding for specific groups of students. This has contributed to the rise in standards and ensured that the school does not hold too large a contingency fund. They have received training in safeguarding and understand how to interpret statistical data about students' examination results. This enables them to hold the school to account effectively. They oversee staff

performance management, including that of the headteacher. Through this process they are aware of the areas within teaching which still need developing.

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	136626
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	441259

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1468
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Searls
Headteacher	Carol Hannaford
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01752 556065
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