

South Devon College

Monitoring visit report

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Name of lead inspector: Peter Green HMI

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Address: South Devon College
Vantage Point
Long Road
Paignton
TQ4 7EJ

Telephone number: 01803 540540

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

The purpose of this visit was to monitor the progress South Devon College (the college) has made in providing full-time education for 14- to 16-year-olds in the first year of this provision.

The provision is called South Devon High School (the high school) and is located in the main college. Pupils have their own base and full access to college facilities. The high school currently has 51 pupils, all from the local area. All pupils are in Year 10 and started in September 2014.

Themes

What progress has the college made in implementing clear admissions and exclusion policies for its 14 to 16 provision?	Significant progress
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The admissions policy and procedures are clear, comprehensive and fully adhered to. The college has developed them through close liaison with the local authorities and in line with its vision to support young people to achieve as well as they can. Parents and carers were fully involved in the process for entry to the high school; they received clear information about what the high school could offer and its expectations. Many prospective pupils also attended highly informative 'taster' days at which they attended lessons and experienced the different surroundings.

The induction process is thorough and effective in helping the pupils to settle into the high school. Current pupils started at the high school in September and managers expect this will be the main time pupils join the school. However, the process and induction are flexible in order to accommodate entry at different points.

A well-considered exclusion policy is in place. The school has not excluded any pupils up to the time of the visit. This is largely due to a range of good internal mechanisms to support pupils and ensure that situations do not deteriorate and lead to exclusion.

What progress has the college made in providing sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to lead and teach the provision and to support the learners?	Significant progress
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The high school's management structure has a clear and distinct focus on providing effective teaching and support for learning. The teachers are qualified and several have experience of teaching in secondary schools. Resources for the team responsible for teaching and supporting the pupils are good. The staff have an appropriate range of skills and qualifications. The team includes English and mathematics specialists and teachers with highly relevant vocational knowledge.

Teachers and support staff receive appropriate and effective continuing professional development to deal with disruptive behaviour and manage interventions. As yet, not all teachers have fully adapted their teaching to take account of the sometimes challenging situations they face.

Pupils benefit from skilled support staff, such as learning support assistants. They receive helpful guidance from academic support coaches whose regular monitoring of their progress is proving very valuable. They also benefit from the well-established and excellent careers guidance services of the college to help them make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

What progress has the college made in ensuring that the curriculum is sufficiently broad and covers all statutory subjects?

Significant progress

The curriculum that pupils follow is broad and balanced. In addition to GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science, all pupils choose to take two academic and two vocational subjects, with the further option of religious studies at GCSE. All are externally examined.

The provision for personal, social, health and economic education meets the needs of the pupils well; it is well integrated with the rest of the pupils' full-time programme and includes a good programme of additional activities. It helps pupils effectively to understand about relationships and life in modern Britain. Senior leaders reinforce such messages in the weekly group assembly.

The pupils enjoy their individual programmes and gain confidence. They learn positive attitudes, new skills and behaviours from being part of a wider college community where there are clear guidelines and expectations of behaviour and respect.

What progress has the college made in quality assuring and evaluating all aspects of the provision for continuous improvement?

Significant progress

The leadership team of the high school routinely uses the well-established quality improvement processes of South Devon College. These include evaluating the performance of provision through regular observations of teaching and learning including learning-walks, self-assessment and course reviews.

Regular and close monitoring of pupils' performance has already had a positive impact. For example, the attendance of all pupils has improved greatly to well above their average levels before they joined the high school.

What progress has the college made in providing learners with sufficient student care, guidance and support, including the implementation of a behaviour policy appropriate for learners aged 14 to 16?

Significant progress

Pupils receive excellent care, guidance and support. The welfare team, supplemented by access to counselling and other specialist services, provides very effective help to pupils. The leadership team is using the pupil premium well to provide good additional learning support and improve pupils' progress and achievement.

Many pupils with poor previous records of attendance, behaviour and academic attainment have responded very positively to the different environment. They now have more optimistic and encouraging views of formal education.

The behaviour policy is appropriate. Staff implement this sensitively; they use contact logs to record both positive aspects and issues to reinforce good conduct and resolve areas of concern. A dedicated 14–16 positive intervention behaviour manager supports them effectively.

All pupils have regular contact with their own personal tutor who provides good pastoral support.

What progress has the provider made in providing good quality teaching, learning and assessment?

Reasonable progress

Teachers and leaders make good use of their assessment of pupils' prior achievement and potential to agree improvement targets with pupils and their parents and carers. They monitor and review these targets regularly. This improves pupils' motivation and instils a sense of purpose into their learning.

Pupils participate well in lessons. Teachers create a productive environment for learning and teaching. Pupils respond enthusiastically and enjoy lessons. Consequently, they make good progress. They benefit from the one-to-one help and from the regular, positive feedback and clear assessments they receive.

Has the college implemented appropriate measures to ensure that all learners are reasonably safeguarded and that it meets its statutory duty for safeguarding in relation to learners of this age group?

Yes

Clear and appropriate arrangements for safeguarding are in place with identified leads for safeguarding, behaviour management and for the 'Prevent' initiative. Staff receive regular, appropriate safeguarding training. Pupils report feeling safe within the high school and around the college site. They like the respectful and welcoming atmosphere.

Strengths and areas for development in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Strengths:

Teachers are well prepared and make good use of the small class sizes to provide effective individual support to pupils.

The positive relationships and trust teachers have established with pupils create a good, productive environment for learning and for building the confidence of pupils.

Pupils make good use of daily after-school supported study sessions to supplement their studies.

The availability of high quality learning resources, including information and communication technology, increases the pupils' motivation and capability to extend their learning.

Areas for development:

Not all teachers manage group discussions and occasional challenging behaviour effectively enough to ensure all pupils benefit.

Written feedback on homework and the correction of spelling and punctuation are not thorough or clear enough to ensure pupils can learn from their mistakes, or improve their work.

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