

# Dartmouth Academy

Milton Lane, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9HW

**Inspection dates** 30 September-1 October 2015 **Overall effectiveness Inadequate** Effectiveness of leadership and management Inadequate Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Inadequate Personal development, behaviour and welfare Inadequate Outcomes for pupils Inadequate Early years provision Good Inadequate 16 to 19 study programmes Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Requires improvement

# Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

# This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. It is particularly weak in the sixth form and for disadvantaged pupils. Too few pupils across the academy are making good progress.
- Too many pupils lack the skills and attitudes they need to learn well. There is not a systematic approach to improving weaknesses in pupils' handwriting, spelling and presentation.
- Pupils' progress slows after they leave the early years. The quality of teaching varies too much across the academy. This issue from the previous inspection has not been tackled effectively enough.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Too few pupils are successful in the courses they choose.
- Too little teaching challenges all pupils to do well. Teachers do not have a clear enough understanding of how they should help disadvantaged pupils to make better progress.

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. It is particularly weak in the sixth form and for disadvantaged
   Pupils' disruptive behaviour sometimes gets in the way of learning. Overall, it requires improvement.
  - Leaders do not check pupils' progress carefully enough. This means that groups of pupils, such as boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, underachieve.
  - Since the previous inspection, leaders have had too little impact on improving the academy. It is too soon to see the impact of changes made by the new leadership team.
  - The curriculum is poorly planned. It does not enable pupils to achieve well in subjects such as science and modern foreign languages.
  - Leaders have not ensured that restraint records are properly kept. This means that the welfare of pupils is inadequate.
  - The challenge provided by governors has been insufficient to halt the academy's decline.

# The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the early years. This part of the academy is well led and managed. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are particular strengths in the creative arts.
- Pupils are loyal to their academy and want to do well. They say they feel safe and that bullying is rare.
- The new leadership team has accurately diagnosed the weaknesses of the academy. They are developing plans to bring about improvement.



# **Full report**

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

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

- Improve pupils' outcomes by taking rigorous and rapid action to drive up achievement:
  - for disadvantaged pupils across the academy
  - for boys, so that their progress and attainment matches that of girls by the end of Key Stage 4
  - in mathematics, particularly in pupils' use and understanding of number in the primary phase
  - in the sixth form, so that pupils complete their courses successfully
  - in the primary phase, so that pupils have the skills they need to thrive in the secondary phase
  - across all subjects in the secondary phase, so that inconsistencies are eliminated and pupils are well
    prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and more is outstanding by:
  - making sure that teachers have the highest expectations, including of how pupils present and complete their work
  - identifying the needs of disadvantaged pupils and ensuring that they receive effective support
  - ensuring that teachers check pupils' understanding, put right misconceptions and move learning on more quickly
  - placing a relentless focus on developing pupils' literacy skills
  - ensuring the accuracy and reliability of assessment information, including in the sixth form, and making sure that teachers use this to challenge all groups of pupils in every lesson.
- Improve pupils' behaviour so that, in every lesson, pupils develop good attitudes to learning and make better progress.
- Urgently improve the procedures for recording the use of restraint. Make sure that leaders use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of support for pupils and reduce the use of restraint over time.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, and governance, by:
  - implementing a sharply focused action plan to address the academy's weaknesses, setting clear timelines and checking closely the impact of actions taken
  - clarifying the long-term future of the sixth form provision
  - developing an academy-wide strategy for improving pupils' literacy skills
  - ensuring a rigorous approach to checking the quality of teaching and responding rapidly to weaknesses identified
  - tracking carefully patterns in the achievement, attendance and behaviour of different groups of pupils across the academy, and taking swift and effective action in response
  - ensuring that additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils is consistently effective in helping them to make better progress, particularly in the secondary phase
  - making sure that governors play a full and effective part in challenging academy leaders to bring about rapid improvement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.



An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.



# **Inspection judgements**

# **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

### is inadequate

- Few issues from the time of the previous inspection have been resolved, and some aspects of the academy's work have declined further. Since the previous inspection, leaders have been deflected by concerns related to the sponsorship of the academy, managing the poor decisions over the organisation of the sixth form and introducing a raft of initiatives, few of which have been seen through or sustained. As a result, the weaknesses at the heart of the academy's work have not been tackled promptly or effectively.
- Since her arrival, the acting Principal has provided much-needed direction and purpose, and has succeeded in galvanising the support of staff in tackling the root causes of the academy's inadequacy. Nevertheless, many of the actions taken by leaders have not yet made a significant difference to improving teaching, pupils' behaviour and achievement. As a result, the capacity of the new leadership team to bring about sustained improvement has not yet been demonstrated.
- Leaders' evaluation of the challenges facing the academy, and its current effectiveness, are accurate. Roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been clarified to ensure greater accountability for improvements. Weaknesses in some aspects of the academy's work, such as boys' achievement and the attendance of different groups of pupils, have only recently been identified.
- Until recently, leadership of the primary phase has also been ineffective. Although it is too soon to see significant impact, there is greater confidence in the new leadership in the primary phase to bring about rapid improvement. In early years, stability in the leadership has been successful in maintaining a good quality of provision since the time of the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is not effective in meeting the needs of pupils. For example, there is no academy-wide strategy for improving pupils' literacy skills and, in the secondary phase, the curriculum does not enable pupils to achieve well in science or in modern foreign languages. This restricts the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and abilities to be successful in the next stage of their education, employment or training. Leaders are working with partners in the academy trust to develop a more challenging curriculum and are continuing to develop the good range of extra-curricular activities. However, in mathematics, the wholesale implementation of materials and approaches from other schools means that not all staff at the academy have been involved in the rationale and design of the programmes they are using. Consequently, they do not have a clear understanding of how they can be used to improve pupils' mathematics.
- Previous assessments of pupils' attainment and progress were inaccurate. Leaders and governors believed that the results in 2015 would be much more positive than they were. Since September 2015, leaders have introduced a more rigorous approach to checking pupils' progress, but many of these systems are too new to be fully tested.
- Leaders have begun to implement a new approach to improving teaching, and a set of new expectations are being linked to teachers' appraisal arrangements. Leaders have begun to check the extent to which teachers are complying with their expectations, but it is too soon for these checks to be providing useful feedback about the quality and impact of the changes being introduced. As a result, there is little evidence that teaching is improving quickly and consistently.
- The impact of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is more effective in the primary phase than it is in the secondary phase. This is because targeted support provided in individual and small group sessions is helping some pupils to make up lost ground. In the secondary phase, too little attention is paid to the progress of disadvantaged pupils and this contributes to their inadequate achievement.
- The PE and sport premium is used to provide specialist coaching throughout the year, and to introduce pupils to new sports such as table tennis. Over half of the pupils in the primary phase have attended a sports club, and almost all pupils have taken part in lunchtime sports activities. Before this, there were no sports clubs provided that pupils could attend. Oversight of the use of the funding, however, has not always been strong enough.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through the curriculum and tutorial time, as well as in assemblies, there are many opportunities for pupils to enhance their understanding. Music has a particularly high profile at the academy, and the many displays of high-quality art work are indicative of pupils' artistic and creative endeavours. Pupils have a good knowledge of contemporary



- issues and recognise the importance of equality, fairness and human rights. Pupils explained how their recent reflections on the plight of refugees and those escaping persecution had challenged their perspectives on the impact of migration and the experiences of families less fortunate than themselves.
- The links with partner schools are providing opportunities for staff training and collaboration to support the development of the curriculum and approaches to assessment. Although this support is greatly valued by the academy, it is not yet bringing about sustained improvements to teaching.
- Inspectors recommend that the academy does not recruit newly qualified teachers following this inspection.

### ■ The governance of the school

- Governors care deeply about the academy and the success of its pupils. Since the previous inspection, they have provided useful challenge over some aspects of its work, including aspects of safeguarding, reviewing home learning and improving pupils' attendance. However, the impact of governance has not been effective in addressing the core weaknesses of the academy, including the quality of teaching. For example, governors do not have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school's strengths, weaknesses or performance. Although they have access to a large amount of performance data, they lack enough good-quality information to provide effective challenge to academy leaders. In some cases, governors are too readily dismissive of the reasons behind significant weaknesses, or have accepted leaders' explanations of past underperformance. There is work to do to ensure that the relationship between the governing body and the board of the multi-academy trust is one which promotes highly effective governance. For example, at the time of the inspection, the child protection policy on the school's website was not tailored to the academy and referenced another school in the trust. Governors are aware of this discrepancy and are working with the trust board to put this right.
- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding requirements such as safe recruitment and secure access to the academy's site are fully in place. Staff have received appropriate child protection training and the academy's work with partners, including parents and the local authority, is thorough and well documented. Governors have made sure that all staff carry a small checklist of their responsibilities and key contacts as part of academy identity badges. However, despite these strengths, the arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. The reasons for this judgement are explained in the section on pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

# Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

# is inadequate

- The overall quality of teaching is inadequate. Over time, this has led to levels of achievement that are too low, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Teachers do not have a clear enough idea of how they should help disadvantaged pupils to make better progress. Although they have more information about disadvantaged pupils in their classes, teachers are not yet acting on this information effectively enough.
- Expectations of pupils' achievement are not consistently high enough. In too many lessons, teaching does not provide enough challenge to all the pupils in the class. For example, weaknesses in the use of assessment mean that the most-able pupils are not always moved on quickly enough to more stretching work.
- Too little teaching is consistently effective in developing pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are not always expected to present their work neatly and to take pride in their work. In mathematics, for example, too many diagrams and charts are untidily drawn without a pencil or ruler. Consequently, they make a poor reference point for pupils for future revision.
- Across the academy, most teaching helps to build positive relationships between pupils and staff. However, this relationship is not always a productive one. Sometimes, pupils are not pushed hard enough to achieve more, and spend too long on work that does not move their learning forward.
- Weaker teaching does not engage and enthuse pupils in their learning. Sometimes, pupils lose interest in what they are doing and this distracts other pupils from their work. By contrast, where teaching is more effective, such as in the early years, pupils enjoy their learning and make faster progress. It is this variation in the quality of teaching across the academy that remains a significant barrier to raising pupils'



achievement.

- Pupils learn best where teachers make good use of assessment and feedback to support learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson for low-attaining pupils, the teacher listened carefully to pupils' responses, and checked closely on what they could and could not do. Based on this feedback, he swiftly adjusted the level of challenge to ensure that the pupils were helped to make good progress throughout the session.
- This good assessment practice is not yet commonplace across the academy. For example, inaccuracies in the assessment of writing in Key Stage 2 have only recently been put right. In addition, while leaders in the secondary phase are developing their preferred approach to assessment, this means that the implementation of new approaches to assessment is taking place at different rates across the academy.

# Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

# Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Despite placing a high priority on pupils' safety and safeguarding, leaders and governors have not ensured that their oversight is as stringent as it should be. In particular, the academy's records of the use of restraint are poor. The academy does not keep a proper log of these incidents, and does not ensure that there is suitable evaluation and follow-up of the use of restraint when this is needed. Leaders were unaware of the number of times a very small number of pupils had needed to be restrained. Although the use of restraint is unusual, these weaknesses in record keeping potentially place pupils' welfare at risk, because leaders are unable to monitor or challenge the use of restraint effectively. For this reason, pupils' personal development and welfare are judged inadequate, and safeguarding as ineffective.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Through the curriculum, assemblies and tutorial sessions, the academy makes sure that pupils learn in age-appropriate ways about healthy lifestyles, understanding and assessing risks, and leading active lives.
- Pupils also understand about different forms of bullying and although they believe it is unusual in the academy, they trust adults to deal with it promptly should they have worries or concerns. Pupils recognise the potential dangers of sharing images and information through the internet, on social media and mobile devices.
- The academy frequently accepts pupils who arrive at different times in their school careers. Those pupils who joined from other schools said they were made to feel very welcome and quickly felt part of the academy community.
- The information, advice and guidance provided to pupils require improvement, including in the sixth form. Although it is sufficiently broad and impartial, some pupils are confused about their options and unclear about all the alternatives open to them. The advice provided to pupils who joined the sixth form was ineffective in ensuring that they made successful choices.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Much of the time, pupils behave well in lessons and around the academy site. However, in a few lessons, behaviour does disturb learning, including in the primary phase. The views of pupils, leaders' selfevaluation, and records of exclusions and detentions confirm this.
- In addition, pupils do not always display good attitudes to learning, including through poor presentation of their work or by not completing tasks set by their teachers.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the academy and most look smart and take pride in their uniform. There is very little litter around the academy site and pupils take care of their new building and its facilities. However, pupils do not always transfer these good attitudes to other situations. Sometimes the conduct of pupils on school buses is not as good as it could be.
- Last year, the overall number of fixed-term exclusions from the academy rose and there were a large number of detentions, mainly for not completing home learning tasks. Until recently, leaders did not analyse the information from exclusions to see if certain groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils.



were over-represented.

■ For most groups of pupils, attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now broadly average overall. Although leaders are working hard to continue to improve it, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disabilities has not improved as quickly as for other groups.

# **Outcomes for pupils**

# are inadequate

- Achievement has declined since the last inspection, including in the sixth form, where outcomes are now inadequate. The achievement of disadvantaged pupils by the end of Key Stage 4 is also inadequate and there is little sign of improvement. This is because not enough teaching helps disadvantaged pupils to make faster progress, particularly in the secondary phase.
- Although children get off to a good start in the early years provision, the progress pupils make in the remainder of the primary phase is too slow. As a result, standards by the end of Year 6 are below average. Leaders' actions in the primary phase are not yet bringing about improvement quickly enough.
- Too many pupils lack the skills they need to access the secondary curriculum effectively. Weaknesses in handwriting and spelling are holding back many pupils from making faster progress. In mathematics, pupils do not always have a secure enough grasp of basic number skills and factual recall.
- At times, the use of simple worksheets hampers the development of pupils' writing skills, particularly in science. The lack of a concerted approach across the academy to improve pupils' skills in literacy and number is a key weakness that has persisted from the previous inspection.
- The reading skills of younger pupils are developed well, particularly in the early years provision. For example, an effective focus on the use of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) ensures that most pupils secure the skills they need to read confidently. However, for some older pupils, progress slows because teaching does not build effectively enough on this good start. For example, additional funding to support weaker readers in Year 7 has not been fully effective in helping pupils to catch up quickly enough.
- Until recently, leaders and governors did not scrutinise the progress of disadvantaged pupils well enough. As a result, in the examinations in 2015, less than one in 10 disadvantaged pupils secured five or more good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics. This means that many of these pupils are not being well prepared for their future choices after completing Year 11.
- Although achievement in English has risen a little since the previous inspection, overall outcomes in this subject, and in mathematics, require improvement. Too few pupils across the academy are making better than expected progress, including the most able. Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in mathematics are weak
- Outcomes are also poor for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and there is little evidence of significant improvement. Leaders do not check the quality and impact of the support provided for pupils carefully enough. As a result, too few pupils make the progress expected of them.
- Too many boys do not achieve as well as they could. For example, the differences between boys' and girls' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 are too wide and have been so for a number of years. Despite this weakness, leaders and governors have only recently pinpointed this as an area of concern. Sometimes, the attitude to learning of a few boys in the primary phase gets in the way of their learning, and also slows the progress of other pupils in the class.

# Early years provision

is good

■ The leadership of early years is good. There is a strong focus on adapting teaching and learning activities to secure good progress. Leaders are thoughtful and reflective, and respond well to the findings of their self-evaluation. In response to relative weaknesses in boys' progress in previous years, leaders ensured that teaching provided greater support and challenge for boys in their learning.

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- Safeguarding, welfare and good supervision are consistently promoted. Strengths in relationships with parents and carers ensure that children benefit from a smooth and supportive induction into the nursery provision.
- Assessment records are detailed and accurate and are effective in supporting good learning throughout the early years. Routines are clearly established and consistently promoted. As a result, children's behaviour and attitudes are good. The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, enriches and stimulates children's development. The teaching of reading and number is particularly strong, although the outdoor area does not always provide good opportunities for children's early attempts at writing.
- Overall, children make good progress throughout the early years. Although children's skills and abilities vary on entry to nursery from year to year, most go on to reach at least a good level of development, and many exceed this. Disadvantaged children in particular benefit from teaching that meets their needs and abilities. By the end of the early years, most children are very well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1.

# 16 to 19 study programmes

# are inadequate

- Leaders are accurate in their assessment of the sixth form as neither financially viable nor sustainable. A legacy of poor decision making has not served the best interests of pupils in the sixth form well.
- Overall outcomes for pupils are inadequate, despite some strengths in vocational programmes and in some academic courses such as art and design. In particular, outcomes in many of the AS-level examinations in 2015 were very poor. Teachers' predictions of pupils' attainment were often very inaccurate
- Only a few pupils who retook GCSE English and mathematics improved their grades. In some cases, pupils' grades were lower than those they had achieved when they were in Year 11.
- Following these results, leaders took the decision to suspend the sixth form and to greatly reduce the number of courses on offer. Staff made sure that all pupils were appropriately guided when considering possible alternatives. A small number of subjects in the sixth form were retained to support those pupils continuing from Year 12 into Year 13 or Year 14, and only a very small number of pupils were recruited into Year 12. However, these changes have created some uncertainty for pupils who are considering their future options.
- Leadership of the sixth form is inadequate. Despite the decisions taken to change the nature of the sixth form, the fundamental problems which have led to its inadequacy persist. For example, there have been no effective checks on the quality of sixth form teaching, assessment or curriculum for some time, and current leaders are only just beginning to consider how provision in the sixth form can be improved.
- The impact of advice and guidance provided to pupils has not always ensured that they have been able to complete their chosen courses successfully. Although leaders have plans in place to improve the enrichment programme, this is not yet having a strong impact on pupils' personal development and welfare.
- For pupils currently in the sixth form, the minimum requirements of the 16 to19 study programmes are generally met. However, the small numbers of pupils in the sixth form limit the opportunities to provide a broad programme of extra-curricular activity, including developing pupils' employability skills.



# School details

136200 Unique reference number Local authority Devon **Inspection number** 10002442

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

All through Type of school

Academy sponsor-led School category

Age range of pupils 3-19 Mixed **Gender of pupils** Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study

programmes

Mixed

Number of pupils on the school roll 457 Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study 21

programmes

Appropriate authority

The governing body

Chair Mary Shaw

Tina Graham **Acting Principal Telephone number** 01803 839700

Website www.dartmouthacademy.org.uk admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk **Email address** 

Date of previous inspection 9-10 October 2013

### Information about this school

- After the previous inspection, the lead sponsor for the academy changed. From September 2014, it joined a multi-academy trust known as Academies South West (ASW). The lead school in this trust is Kingsbridge Community College. The chief executive officer for this trust is a national leader of education (NLE).
- Since the previous inspection, the size and composition of the senior leadership team at Dartmouth Academy have changed significantly. The Principal and three other senior leaders left the academy in the summer of 2015. The acting Principal took over on 1 September 2015.
- Children in early years are taught in a Nursery and a Reception class.
- There is a separate children's centre on the academy site which has provision for children aged from birth to three years.
- The academy is smaller than most primary and secondary schools. The primary phase has one form on entry. The sixth form is very much smaller than most. From 1 September 2015, the number of sixth form courses offered at the academy has reduced.
- No pupils attend offsite alternative provision.
- The academy does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4.



# Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons and other activities. They talked to many pupils about their experiences of the academy. In their visits to lessons, inspectors also looked carefully at the quality of pupils' work and the accuracy of the academy's assessment information. Many lessons were observed jointly with members of the academy's leadership team.
- Discussions took place with the acting Principal, with other leaders and with various members of staff. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body. He also met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust of which the academy is a part.
- Inspectors scrutinised records of the school's self-evaluation, the checks on teaching quality, assessment information, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Safeguarding documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at the 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. The views of staff were obtained and 29 responded to a written staff questionnaire.

# **Inspection team**

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