

# Atrium Studio School

Balland Lane, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7EW

## Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The principal has a deep-seated commitment to ensuring that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, can succeed. This has been the driving force in the development of the school since it opened in 2015. As a result, all pupils feel welcome and able to contribute.
- Leaders make sure that the school's expectations of pupils are high. Some pupils join the school with a record of poor progress in their previous school. However, the school's atmosphere is infectious and these pupils are catching up.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points because they feel safe and their needs are met. Teachers know their pupils well and work alongside them to build their confidence and their skills.
- Pupils are proud of the school and of their work. They believe they have been given a great opportunity by coming to the school. Their attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Pupils conduct themselves around the school very well. The atmosphere is calm and orderly. Behaviour in lessons is very good.
- Multi-academy trust leaders and local governors hold school leaders to account well. They ensure that leaders hold to the school's founding vision and continue to plan effectively for the school's future development.
- Leaders ensure that the school's specialism of 'the built environment' is central to the curriculum. All pupils study courses in design, engineering and construction (DEC) and have regular opportunities to engage with adults from the building sector.
- Pupils benefit greatly from opportunities to work alongside professionals from the building industry and to undertake independent learning projects. They are highly motivated by these opportunities and the standard of work they produce is high.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They are closely monitored and supported when they need additional help. There is effective, close cooperation with the partnering secondary school to provide an effective curriculum.
- Pupils' progress is sometimes slowed because of their poor grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers do not routinely correct errors and so pupils repeat mistakes.
- The school's growth has meant that some leaders are relatively new to their posts and, so, inexperienced. Currently, middle leaders are not routinely monitoring the quality of teaching with sufficient rigour. This has allowed some weaker teaching to continue unchecked.

## Full report

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

- Improve the standards of literacy across the whole school, including the sixth form, by:
  - developing a whole-school approach to teaching literacy
  - ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of spelling, punctuation, grammar and vocabulary.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - supporting new leaders in developing their skills and making expectations of them clear.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal leads the school very effectively. He has a clear vision, based on a strongly held set of values. He is focused on ensuring that every pupil can aspire to success. He communicates his beliefs clearly and, as a result, enjoys the wholehearted support of pupils, staff, parents and carers.
- Leaders and teachers put an emphasis on the values of respect and tolerance for others. The result is that the school community is a harmonious one where pupils who have previously found it difficult to integrate socially find their place and are able to thrive.
- Leaders have created a culture that welcomes pupils whatever their previous degree of success. They make sure that every pupil is known as an individual and that their needs are understood. Consequently, pupils feel cared for and able to make progress.
- The principal has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. He understands how the leadership structures and priorities need to change as the school grows from small beginnings to a more established organisation. As a result, the growth of the school has been handled smoothly.
- The curriculum is a key feature of the school's success. Pupils come to the school because of its specialism in the built environment. They are enthused by the curriculum because leaders have ensured that building, design and architecture are at its heart. All pupils study DEC. This is supplemented by the opportunity to work on extended projects. They also benefit from high-quality work experience with the school's industrial partners. Other GCSE subjects, such as mathematics and science, take opportunities to weave the specialism into their programmes of study where they can. The result is that pupils are highly motivated and keen to succeed.
- The curriculum is also rich in opportunities for pupils to consider and discuss spiritual and moral concerns, such as how building development can affect the ecology of the area and the quality of the lives of local people. Pupils join with the neighbouring partner secondary school to take part in extra-curricular sport and arts clubs. Taken together, these opportunities provide a rich diet of personal development and growth for pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are given good, independent advice regarding their future careers. This is underpinned by the school's very positive relationships with its partners in the building industry who give pupils opportunities to find out about the range of careers on offer in the sector.
- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to make good progress. These pupils are supported well. There is a programme of personal coaching for pupils if and when they need it and their progress is closely monitored. As a result of this additional attention, disadvantaged pupils are making progress that is at least as good as their peers.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are monitored closely and that targeted funding is used effectively. Consequently, these pupils are making good progress from their starting points and building their

skills and knowledge appropriately.

- The school is growing and some leaders are relatively new in their posts. Middle leaders are only now beginning to tackle the task of monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their departments. The result is that some small pockets of weaker teaching have not yet been addressed.
- The principal and senior leaders have carefully crafted a programme of training for staff. The impact has been monitored and additional support has been provided where necessary. Teachers are motivated and positive about the training they have been given. It has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching across the school.
- Leaders have been successful in making sure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the importance of democracy and the rule of law. Teachers lay an emphasis on ensuring that pupils respect the views and beliefs of others. Pupils say that classmates are welcomed into the community regardless of their ethnicity or sexuality.
- Leaders have not given the leadership of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum a high priority. For literacy, in particular, this has resulted in pupils producing written work that does not always do them credit. This is also the case for students in the sixth form. The principal is aware of the issue and is moving to address it.

### **Governance of the school**

- The board of trustees has a good oversight of the growth of the school and of its strengths and weaknesses. The trustees have successfully steered its development from its inception. They have successfully addressed financial and personnel issues and so ensured that the school is established and secure.
- Trustees have set up a local governing body to monitor the work of the school more directly. They have ensured that it includes well-qualified professionals from education and industry who have the skills to hold leaders to account effectively. The local governing body focuses on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors ask leaders challenging questions and persist until they are satisfied. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of the school and are monitoring its progress effectively.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils are safe and they feel safe. There is a strong emphasis on each pupil being known and understood by staff. Leaders and teachers are aware that a significant proportion of pupils have particular vulnerabilities and they are careful to support them appropriately.
- The school's specialism of the built environment brings additional potential hazards. Leaders work with industry professionals to ensure that the activities pupils undertake are properly risk-assessed and safe.
- All appropriate safeguarding checks are made and records are complete and up to date. Staff are trained and know what to do if a pupil discloses a safeguarding incident. The school has a positive, professional relationship with the local authority and can

access additional support when required. Parents feel that school staff keep them well informed.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Teachers ensure that pupils get the work they need for them to make good progress. All pupils are assessed when they arrive in Year 9 and their strengths noted so that teachers can give them appropriate work. Teachers then work with individual pupils in their classes to help them make progress. Pupils value this attention and say it is the main reason for their progress.
- Teachers know that a significant proportion of pupils did not make good progress in their previous school. They adapt tasks and activities to build pupils' confidence. As a result, pupils begin to respond and produce better work as their self-esteem improves.
- Most teachers are subject specialists who know their subjects well. They plan appropriate work for their pupils that focuses on the key points. This clarifies things for pupils and helps develop their understanding.
- Leaders closely monitor the progress that pupils are making. Teachers intervene quickly when a pupil falls behind. Those pupils who need it are also given personal coaching. Pupils feel that there is a strong safety net in place for them if necessary.
- The quality of teaching in DEC is a strength of the school. Pupils are given tasks that stimulate and motivate them. The challenges that teachers set force them to think hard. Pupils respond very positively, producing high-calibre work.
- Mathematics teaching is also strong. Teachers quickly assess any gaps in pupils' understanding and address them before moving on to more complex work without wasting time. This is effective in supporting those who previously found mathematics difficult and in addressing the needs of those who need extra challenge.
- Where teaching is less effective, it is because teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to stimulate pupils, particularly the most able. In these cases, pupils remain compliant and work diligently but lose the zest for learning that they have in the majority of their lessons.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are given feedback on their work in line with the school's policy. They often supplement written comments with verbal feedback. When this works well, pupils make good progress. Sometimes, however, pupils do not understand what is required and so their progress slows.
- The quality of teaching of literacy is inconsistent. Misspellings and poor grammar are sometimes left uncorrected and so pupils repeat their mistakes. This results in pupils' work that is otherwise of a high standard being undermined.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders use the small size of the school to good effect. Teachers are able to focus on a

relatively small number of pupils. They ensure that pupils are known as individuals and that their needs are met.

- Pupils are proud of their school. They have chosen to come. Some travel many miles. Their attitudes to learning are very good. They are very keen to do well and they apply themselves to their work assiduously.
- Pupils are inspired by the aspirational and inclusive culture that has been built by the principal and governors. Those who had not been successful in other schools rapidly settle in and begin to flower.
- Leaders and teachers focus on ensuring that all pupils feel comfortable and able to prosper. Pupils and parents say they are successful. A significant proportion of pupils have a history of anxiety but these are supported and gain in confidence.
- School leaders provide pupils with a range of opportunities to gradually grow their self-confidence within a safe environment. Pupils meet and work with professionals from the building industry and present their work to them. They also have the chance to take part in a public speaking competition.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about the career guidance and support they are given. Much of it is centred on the school's specialism but pupils are also supported well if they wish to pursue other pathways. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education or training.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behave very well as they move between lessons and at lunchtime. They treat each other with good humour and respect. They move around in a calm and orderly manner. Their relationships with staff are very positive.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons. Their attitudes to work are uniformly positive. They listen to teachers and try hard to grasp new concepts. They show great enthusiasm for the practical activities that exist in the curriculum.
- Bullying is very rare and pupils report that it is dealt with well by staff when it does occur. Pupils are respectful of those with different faiths or from different ethnic groups. They say that homophobic bullying does not occur.
- Attendance overall is broadly in line with the national average. However, the vast majority of pupils have close to 100% attendance. The attendance of the tiny minority that are persistently absent has improved markedly since they arrived at the school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils are making good progress overall. Many came to the school in Year 9 having underachieved in Years 7 and 8 and so needing to catch up. The work they are now doing shows that, in most cases, they have done so and are now working at an appropriate standard for their ability.
- Pupils who have lower starting points are making good progress. They are benefiting from the individual attention they receive and the support that teachers give them.

Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress because they are closely monitored and their work is tailored to meet their needs. They receive good support from teaching assistants, who understand how to help them access the learning in lessons.

- The most able pupils make good progress in those lessons, such as mathematics and DEC, where they are challenged to push themselves. They also benefit from opportunities to stretch their thinking in extended project work and in tasks based on their work experience. This is not universal, however, and there are occasions when they are not given the chance to reach the highest standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making progress comparable to that of other pupils. This is a result of the close attention and support they receive.
- Pupils are reaching good standards in mathematics. Pupils of all abilities are making good progress from their starting points in Year 9. Pupils who previously found mathematics particularly difficult respond well to the encouragement they receive and grow in self-confidence.
- Pupils are making appropriate progress in English, often from low starting points. Their ability to analyse literature is good; however, some pupils have weaker literacy skills than they should have. This prevents them from expressing themselves as well as they otherwise could.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next phase of their education. They are knowledgeable about careers pathways and destinations. They are confident working in groups and in talking with adults in a work environment. Their ability to solve problems is good.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

**Good**

- Students make good progress overall as a result of good-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers take good account of the differing starting points of students and set work that challenges them appropriately.
- Students take many of their lessons in groups in the neighbouring secondary school. They enjoy this and benefit from the facilities and opportunities available within the larger establishment. However, students also value the smaller scale of their school and the welcoming and calm atmosphere.
- In 2017, a small number of students took external examinations. This was the first cohort for the school and results were good.
- Students choose the school sixth form for two reasons. They are drawn to the courses available, which focus on the built environment. They also value the small scale of the school, which most know, having studied at the neighbouring school in Year 11. They are universally happy with their choices. Their attitudes to learning are very good.
- Students are closely monitored by teachers and support is put in place when they struggle. They feel very positive about the attention they receive. They highlight the individual one-to-one meetings they have with the principal.
- The sixth form is well led. Leaders have established the sixth form relatively recently and are building its identity and character. They have focused on the curriculum and the support students are offered. As a result, numbers are rising and students are very

positive about their experience.

- The quality of the curriculum is very strong. The combination of advanced level DEC courses offered through the school's specialism and the breadth of choice from the large neighbouring school provides a rich diet.
- Some students produce work that includes errors in punctuation, spelling and grammar. When this occurs, it undermines the quality of their written reports and tasks.
- The programme of study is broad and well balanced. It includes significant opportunities for students to work with professionals in the building industry in high-quality work experience placements. Students also have access to enrichment visits and trips organised by their partner school.
- Students are kept safe through a strong set of safeguarding procedures and practices. They know how to keep themselves safe and know who to go to should they ever feel unsafe.



## School details

Unique reference number	142124
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10042657

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy studio school
Age range of pupils	13 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	21
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Nigel Gore
Principal	Matt Messias
Telephone number	01364 655399
Website	<a href="http://www.atrium-studio.co.uk">www.atrium-studio.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@atrium-studio.co.uk">enquiries@atrium-studio.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It opened in September 2015.
- The school is part of South Dartmoor Academy Trust. It specialises in the built environment. It borders on to South Dartmoor Community College and shares some facilities with them.
- The sixth form is run in partnership with South Dartmoor Community College. Students from Atrium sometimes attend classes there.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is broadly average.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the range of subjects and age groups, and scrutinised a wide range of pupils' written work. Many of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour data, safeguarding documents and the school's review of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with trustees and governors, the principal, senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils.
- An inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took into account the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Andrew Lovett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Green

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2018