

# Stoke Damerel Community College

Somerset Place, Stoke, Plymouth, Devon PL3 4BD

## Inspection dates

7–8 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
16 to 19 study programmes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Governors have not challenged senior leaders with enough urgency. As a result, senior leaders were slow to react to a decline in standards at the school over the last two years.
- Pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was well below the national average in 2017. Current pupils' progress is better in English and in mathematics. However, it remains weak in geography, history and French.
- Teaching is not consistently good across the school. Teachers' planning does not take into account the full range of pupils' abilities and so the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
- Sixth-form students' progress is improving but is not yet good because too few of the most able students attain the highest grades they are capable of.
- Where teaching is not sufficiently well planned, pupils lose interest and do not concentrate on their work.
- Too many pupils are not confident in their own ability. They give up too easily when they face difficulties, and this leads to unfinished work in their books.
- Middle leaders do not have a consistently accurate view of the quality of teaching in their subject areas. Consequently, the rate of improvement in some subjects is not as rapid as in English and mathematics.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils has a sufficient effect on their academic progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new principal and vice principals have a good understanding of the areas that need to improve. They are beginning to raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving.
- Years 7 and 8 pupils' literacy skills, particularly in reading, are improving.
- Senior leaders give pupils' health and welfare a high priority. Consequently, pupils are supported well when they face personal or emotional difficulties.
- Teaching in some areas of the school is making good use of new technology to help pupils learn more effectively.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
  - challenging consistently the most able pupils in key stage 4 and the most able students in the sixth form to achieve the highest possible grades
  - ensuring that recent improvements in English and mathematics teaching continue and are spread to other subject areas
  - using pupil premium funding effectively to raise disadvantaged pupils' achievement further.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - making sure that learning activities are interesting and stimulating so that pupils are motivated to concentrate and succeed
  - building on the work that has already begun to develop pupils' confidence in their own abilities.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the local governing body keeps a sharp focus on pupils' outcomes
  - providing training for governors to deepen their understanding of information about the performance of groups of pupils in the school
  - developing the accuracy of middle leaders' evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in their departments
  - sharpening the evaluation of the school's use of pupil premium funding.

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

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not reacted quickly enough to falling standards at the school. The progress of pupils, particularly the most able pupils, has not been good enough in recent years.
- Leadership of the sixth form, over time, has not been strong enough to secure good academic progress for students. Too many students achieve well below their capabilities.
- Senior leaders have not used pupil premium funding effectively enough to support disadvantaged pupils. Their evaluation of the impact of this funding is not as precise as it needs to be to pinpoint actions that will improve disadvantaged pupils' progress sharply. Many of these pupils leave the school without attaining basic qualifications.
- Middle leaders' judgement of the quality of teaching is overly generous and so actions to improve teaching have not been taken urgently enough in some subject areas.
- The new principal and vice principals are acutely aware of the need to improve pupils' progress. They have increased the rigour of teachers' performance management and so teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are starting to rise but are still not high enough.
- Senior leaders have recently changed the timing of the school day and reorganised the timetable. These changes are allowing greater collaboration between staff and so effective teaching strategies are being shared more quickly. Teachers appreciate, and are taking full advantage of, the bespoke professional training they are offered. This is leading to improvement in their skills and the quality of teaching. Staff are beginning to make effective use of contacts with other schools in the region.
- Teachers fully support the renewed vision set out by senior leaders and so they are well motivated. Newly qualified teachers, in particular, have high morale.
- Middle leaders in mathematics and English have developed the curriculum well in their subjects and taken the opportunity to improve the quality of teachers' planning. This is improving the quality of teaching quickly in these areas.
- Senior leaders have recently made changes to the content and timing of the curriculum, allowing key stage 4 pupils to complete more qualifications and so better meet their needs. Special one-day events involving businesses and community projects enrich the curriculum well. Key stage 3 pupils study a broad range of subjects. A 'nurture pathway' provides effective support for those Year 7 pupils who need extra help transferring from primary school. However, leaders' efforts to build pupils' self-confidence have not been consistently effective, and so some pupils lack self-assurance.
- Senior leaders give pupils' personal, social and health education a high priority. For example, diversity days help pupils respect different cultures and religions. Through 'modern Britain' lessons, and the elected 'modern Britain council', pupils are given ample opportunity to learn first-hand about democratic processes and the rule of law.

- The school provides a wide variety of extra-curricular activities including a large number of sports clubs and a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) club. These help pupils to develop their interests and widen their horizons.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded through the curriculum and supported well by assemblies and other activities. For example, pupils involved in the sports leaders programme develop their social skills rapidly.
- Spending of funding to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well organised and effective. Teaching assistants provide expert help for these pupils.
- Senior leaders have been successful in supporting pupils in Year 7 who need to catch up with literacy and numeracy skills. The funding provided to support these pupils has been used well. Consequently, pupils currently in key stage 3 have made good progress with these skills, particularly reading.
- The great majority of staff are proud to work at the school and feel well supported by senior leaders. Most parents and carers who responded to the online survey, Parent View, believe that the school is well led and managed and would recommend the school to other parents.

## **Governance of the school**

- The chair of the local governing body is knowledgeable about the school and passionate about its role in the local community. However, the governing body has not provided effective challenge to senior leaders in recent years over pupils' progress. New governors, appointed in the last year, have brought better expertise in the analysis of information about the performance of particular groups of pupils at the school. This expertise is not yet spread widely enough among the governing body.
- The governing body fulfils its duty to oversee arrangements for safeguarding pupils well. It manages the finances of the school effectively. Governors have ensured that extra funding for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up and for pupils who have SEN and disabilities is used well. However, they have not ensured that senior leaders' evaluation of pupil premium spending has been sharp enough.
- The chair of the local governing body also chairs the board of the trust; the two bodies work together closely. The trust has a clear vision for children's education in the local area. This vision has led it to invest considerable time and energy over the last two years to develop a primary school and successfully launch a new studio school.
- Governors are ambitious for the school. They recognise that last year was a 'year of change' in many respects at the school. They are now fully focused on challenging and supporting senior leaders to raise pupils' aspirations and progress.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders ensure that the procedures for keeping pupils safe go beyond statutory requirements. This is a strength of the school. Rigorous vetting procedures are used for all staff who work in

the school. School records show that any concerns about pupils' welfare are logged promptly and followed up tenaciously, using outside agencies where appropriate.

- Senior leaders develop pupils' awareness of risk well. For example, pupils receive and understand guidance about the safe use of the internet. Pupils and parents said that the school is a safe place. Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked of an atmosphere of tolerance and respect at the school.
- All staff and governors are trained to an appropriate level in safeguarding practice. Senior leaders make safeguarding a high priority; staff are kept aware of their safeguarding responsibilities through regular updates and communications. Senior leaders continually look for opportunities to improve pupils' well-being, for example, developing systems to provide timely support for pupils who have witnessed domestic violence. Consequently, there is a culture of vigilance at the school, which ensures that pupils are safe.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Teaching does not consistently challenge the most able pupils because learning activities are frequently not well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers' expectations of what these pupils are capable of are not high enough.
- Teaching in mathematics and English is well planned, and so pupils' are usually engaged and motivated. In other subjects, however, teachers' planning varies and, where it is not as strong, teaching does not interest pupils sufficiently to hold their attention.
- Senior leaders have introduced more rigorous assessment procedures over the last year. Teachers use assessments to identify specific areas where pupils need to improve. Pupils are aware of their academic targets. However, they are not always clear about how they should go about improving their work.
- Pupils are regularly given tasks to start straight away in lessons and so time is being used more effectively than in the past. Teachers are keen to implement ideas about questioning that senior leaders have recently introduced. However, teachers' questioning of pupils remains ineffective in many cases because questions are either too complex or too simplistic to help pupils to learn.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. Changes to the timetable have allowed greater flexibility to match teachers' expertise with the needs of different groups of pupils. These changes have only very recently taken place and so are yet to demonstrate a significant impact on pupils' progress.
- Teaching in media studies and photography uses new technology well to encourage pupils' participation. Boys, in particular, have been enthused by the use of digital technology in some subject areas. Online systems are being used effectively to promote homework and to help pupils track their progress.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are generally good. Most pupils respect their teachers, and this allows teaching to proceed unhindered in most cases.
- Teaching assistants help pupils well because they have suitable experience and

expertise. This allows pupils who have SEN and disabilities, particularly those pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder, to be included in learning across the school. This is the hallmark of this highly inclusive school.

- A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that pupils are well taught at this school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Staff work hard to develop pupils' aspirations. However, too many pupils lack the self-belief to persevere with their academic work when it proves difficult. Consequently, work in their books can be left incomplete, and this leaves gaps in their understanding.
- Some pupils' attitudes to their learning are not consistently positive. For example, they may not arrive at school on time or they may be late to lessons during the day. This hinders the progress they make.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Senior leaders use lessons, assemblies and special events well to make pupils aware of how to stay safe in a variety of situations. For example, pupils know how to avoid risks when using social media websites.
- As a result of regular and effective communication with their counterparts, senior leaders ensure that pupils who attend alternative provision are kept safe and are well cared for.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is rare at school. They said that, when it does happen, staff take it seriously and deal with it effectively. Pupils described several effective strategies used by the school, which allow them to voice any concerns they have.
- A team of staff provides expert counselling and advice, drawing on external expertise when necessary, to support pupils when they face personal or emotional problems. This is a strength of the school. Pupils transferring from primary school in Year 7, as well as pupils who join the school at other times, are well supported by knowledgeable and caring staff. For example, pupils arriving from overseas feel welcomed and included.
- The school provides impartial careers education and guidance through a well thought-out strategy. Many pupils have a good idea of the area of work they would like to go into when they leave.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The new principal has taken steps at the start of this year to raise teachers' expectations of pupils' appearance and their behaviour in lessons. While this has encouraged virtually all pupils to wear their uniform smartly, some pupils still lose

concentration in lessons, especially when teaching is not sufficiently interesting.

- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school at break and lunchtime. Staff supervise the site diligently and, as a result, pupils feel well looked after and secure at all times.
- Pupils are typically polite to each other and to visitors. The vast majority of pupils have a strong sense of moral duty. They accept each other regardless of differences in their backgrounds or circumstances. This contributes strongly to the welcoming ethos at the school.
- The rate of pupils' attendance has fallen over the last three years and is below average. This hinders pupils' academic progress, particularly those pupils who are persistently absent. Senior leaders' actions have reduced the rate of persistent absence in the last year, but it remains too high.
- The number of exclusions from school has risen in recent years to just above the national average. The school uses on-site facilities well to support the minority of pupils who need help to modify their behaviour. Pupils' behaviour in off-site alternative provision is appropriate and is managed well.
- Most parents believe that pupils are well behaved at school. They support the principal's high expectations of behaviour.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils' progress in several subjects has fallen in recent years. This led to Year 11 pupils' attainment in their GCSE examinations in 2017 being well below that which could be expected of them.
- The most able pupils' progress was below average in 2016 and declined further in 2017. Work in pupils' books and the school's assessment information show that too many of these pupils are still not making the progress they should.
- Pupils' progress in both English and mathematics fell sharply last year. Strengthened leadership has resulted in a marked improvement in current pupils' progress in both of these subjects. A far higher proportion of Year 11 pupils are on track to attain at least a grade 4 in both GCSE English and mathematics this year. In geography, history and French, pupils' progress is improving, but not at the same rapid rate, and so remains weak.
- Disadvantaged pupils form a large proportion of the school population. Their progress across a range of subjects has been weak in recent years and was well below average in 2017, particularly for the most able disadvantaged pupils. The school's efforts to support disadvantaged pupils currently in the school have brought some success. While still well below that of other pupils nationally, their progress is improving.
- Pupils who enter the school in Year 7 with low levels of attainment in literacy are supported well. Recent work to develop their reading ability has been successful, and so more pupils in Years 7 and 8 are reading fluently and with understanding.
- Key stage 3 pupils' attainment is particularly good in computing and photography.



- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the effective help they receive. In particular, pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder are supported well and make good progress both in the specialist resource base and across the school in mainstream lessons.
- A small number of pupils who have health, emotional or behavioural difficulties attend off-site alternative provision at ACE. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site vocational training programmes at Aspire. These pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils understand the range of education, training or employment opportunities that are available to them. However, in recent years they have not been well prepared for the next stage of their education because too few have attained the basic qualifications they require.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### Requires improvement

- The sixth form requires improvement because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not high enough to ensure that students make sufficient progress. In 2017, students' progress was well below average on academic programmes and on applied general programmes.
- Students who retake GCSE English and/or mathematics in the sixth form do not make enough progress and so too few of them improve their attainment.
- The rate of students' attendance has improved this year because senior leaders have strengthened monitoring procedures and raised expectations of punctuality. However, while improving, students' attendance is still too low.
- The recently appointed senior leader with responsibility for the sixth form has a clear vision for raising the quality of teaching in the sixth form and improving students' progress.
- Senior leaders have made the assessment of students' attainment more reliable by ensuring a greater level of moderation with other schools and organisations. As a result, senior leaders have a more accurate view of students' progress. They are using this to raise teachers' expectations of what students, particularly the most able students, can achieve. Students' currently in Years 12 and 13 are making better progress on both academic and applied general programmes than in previous years.
- The curriculum includes a wide range of vocational courses at levels 1, 2 or 3. These are taught in collaboration with external providers. Outcomes for students on these vocational courses are strong. Senior leaders are keeping the curriculum under review and making changes to make it better meet the needs of students.
- The proportion of students who stay in the sixth form from Year 12 into Year 13 to complete A-level courses is in line with the national average. However, the proportion that is retained on applied general courses is below average.
- Students have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the main school. For example, many students act as peer listeners to support other students and younger pupils at the school. These activities help develop students' confidence and empathy.



- Students' personal development and welfare are promoted well by a programme of tutorials and events. For example, a day of interviews and curriculum vitae (CV) workshops run by local employers developed students' employability skills well. The school provides the expected minimum requirement for work-related activity. Leaders acknowledge the value of high-quality work experience and plan to extend this provision.
- Students feel safe at school and understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. They are knowledgeable about many aspects of online safety. However, some students have little understanding of the risk of fraud when using online bank accounts.
- Senior leaders ensure that students receive appropriate careers guidance and use this to make informed decisions about their next steps. Senior leaders track the destinations of students when they leave. Many students go on to a range of universities. A higher proportion of students than seen nationally secure places on apprenticeships.
- Students are positive about their decision to join the sixth form. Their attitudes to study are generally good. Senior leaders have recently introduced more supervised study time. Most students use this time wisely, and this is helping to improve their progress.

## School details

Unique reference number	136626
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10045351

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1404
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	184
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Colin Searls
Principal	Anita Frier
Telephone number	01752 556065
Website	<a href="http://www.sdcc.net">www.sdcc.net</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:info@sdcc.net">info@sdcc.net</a>
Date of previous inspection	4–5 March 2014

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Inspiring Schools Partnership multi-academy trust. The trust is responsible for Stoke Damerel Community College, Montpelier Primary School and the Scott Medical and Healthcare College, which was opened in September 2017.
- The chair of the local governing body is also the chair of the trust board.
- The principal was appointed to her role in September 2017. Two new vice-principals were also appointed at that time.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has a 14-place

unit for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder.

- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have education, health and care plans is also well above average.
- The school is a member of the South West Teaching School Alliance and the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils who have emotional, behavioural or health needs attend off-site alternative provision through the ACE multi-academy trust in Plymouth. Some key stage 4 pupils attend vocational training at Aspire.
- Vocational courses in the sixth form are provided in collaboration with City College Plymouth, Achievement Training, South West Art Warehouse, 1<sup>st</sup> Leap, Construction Training South West, North Prospect Garage Project and Discovery College.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school did not meet the minimum standard for academic value added on 16 to 19 study programmes in 2016.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders and the chair of the local governing body and two other governors.
- Inspectors observed learning across all age groups and in a wide range of subjects. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke with pupils and students in their lessons and looked at the work in their books.
- Formal meetings were held with pupils from key stages 3, 4 and 5. Inspectors also spoke to many pupils informally at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's review of its own performance, minutes of governors' meetings, development plans, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance logs and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors took account of 53 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 59 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors considered one letter from a pupil.

## Inspection team

Paul Williams, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Hummerstone	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Lees	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Law	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lydia Pride	Ofsted Inspector

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