

South Dartmoor Community College

Balland Lane, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7EW

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of aspects of the school's work is overgenerous.
- The number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high.
- Middle leaders do not consistently use assessment information to monitor the progress of pupils. Furthermore, this information is not accurate in all subjects.
- Leaders do not check with sufficient rigour that their vision for high-quality teaching is evident in actual classroom practice.
- Disadvantaged pupils are too often excluded from lessons and activities during the school day.
- Staff do not have high enough expectations of what all pupils can achieve, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils lack enthusiasm for learning.
- The teaching of the careers education programme in the main school is too variable and leaders have not evaluated its effectiveness.
- Teachers do not routinely adapt work and activities for the needs of pupils of different abilities.

The school has the following strengths

- The principal has recently implemented key changes which are beginning to improve aspects of the school's work.
- Provision in the sixth form is good. Students are well supported and make good progress.
- Safeguarding is effective because clear procedures for child protection are in place. Staff are well trained and take their responsibilities seriously.
- The proportion of pupils excluded from the school is low and below schools nationally.
- The principal and other leaders are steadily securing the support of staff and raising morale. They are determined to improve pupils' experience of school.
- Pupils receive strong pastoral support for their emotional, social and behavioural needs.
- Pupils benefit from a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sports and the arts.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders are accurate and objective in their self-evaluation
 - leaders check rigorously that intended measures to improve the quality of teaching happen in practice and have demonstrable impact
 - all middle leaders consistently use assessment information to monitor the progress of groups of pupils effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, by ensuring that in all subjects:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers provide work that is closely matched to pupils' different needs
 - teachers assess pupils with greater accuracy
 - pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and show a high level of willingness to challenge themselves.
- Improve personal development, welfare and behaviour by:
 - reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent
 - reducing the number of exclusions during the school day for poor behaviour for disadvantaged pupils
 - evaluating the careers education programme for pupils in the main school and improving its teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Over time, leaders have not ensured that pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, have made the progress of which they are capable across the curriculum. This is because weaknesses in teaching, behaviour and attendance have not been fully overcome. It is also because leaders too readily put the underachievement of some pupils down to contextual challenges.
- Leaders' assessment of their own effectiveness and different aspects of the school's work is overgenerous. They have not taken a sufficiently objective and rigorous view of their work. Consequently, over time, this has hindered efforts to ensure that pupils' achievement continues to rise rapidly in all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders are successfully communicating a vision for high-quality teaching to the wider staff. This vision is based on pupils understanding and engaging with the process of learning. However, the principles that leaders describe are not yet sufficiently evident in day-to-day practice.
- The principal took up post in January, having previously been head of the main school. The autonomy provided by his new role has enabled him to make a number of positive changes, many linked to the structure of leadership. These changes are sowing the seeds for school improvement. However, the evidence of their impact of work is yet to be seen.
- The principal is highly committed to the school. He is determined to improve the quality of pupils' experience and raise their achievement. To this end, he is working closely with other leaders, who are equally committed, to galvanise staff behind a common purpose. This is beginning to work. Most of the staff who responded to the survey issued during the inspection are proud to be members of staff at the school.
- Subject leaders are better supported and line-managed since the recent introduction of faculty leaders. However, this is a relatively new change. The impact of their work to raise achievement is not yet fully evident.
- Middle leaders are not yet fully adept at using assessment information to monitor pupils' progress, particularly specific groups of pupils. Furthermore, assessment is not accurate in all areas of the curriculum, in part because staff are still adjusting to national changes to the GCSE grading system.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has provided strong support for pupils' social, emotional and pastoral needs. This is exemplified by the learning enrichment centre, which helps specific pupils to develop better readiness for learning. However, funding has not as yet led to better academic outcomes for these pupils.
- Leaders are in the process of changing the curriculum so that it better suits the needs and interests of the pupils. This is a principled decision driven by moral purpose. Going forward, pupils will not be required to study a language, for example, if it is not felt to be appropriate.
- Pupils are very positive about the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They take

advantage of a range of sports clubs and various arts endeavours, including the annual school production. Pupils also report that staff provide a range of useful homework and revision clubs in different subject areas.

- The new chief executive of the South Dartmoor multi-academy trust is working collaboratively with the principal to help him make necessary changes.

Governance of the school

- The work of governors in recent years has not helped to prevent pupils' underachievement, particularly those who are disadvantaged, in some areas. This is partly because, until recently, governors did not feel able to provide appropriate challenge to leaders over pupils' progress.
- However, governors are now more involved in the work of the school. They provide an increasing level of challenge, with strong encouragement from the principal. This is because all parties recognise the need for robust accountability based on appropriate checks and balances. Consequently, governors now receive frequent reports on the school's progress and ask demanding questions of leaders.
- Governors bring a good range of relevant experience and expertise to their work. Those with educational experience use this knowledge effectively to ask the right questions at meetings. Leaders also work successfully with governors to ensure that they have a detailed understanding of published information on pupils' progress and achievement. This too helps ensure that the right questions are asked. Governors are committed and loyal; they do the job because they care about the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The designated safeguarding lead, supported by the wider team, has a clear and effective oversight of the culture of safeguarding in the school. The team ensure that child protection is at the top of everyone's agenda. They do this by continually keeping the profile of safeguarding high and 'drip-feeding' reminders and information at every available opportunity. For example, they issue a 'Safeguarding topic of the month' newsletter to staff. Parents also receive regular safeguarding newsletters.
- Staff are well trained on all aspects of child protection. The designated lead quizzes and tests staff to ensure that there are no gaps in their understanding. Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils are comprehensive, detailed and up to date. The designated lead audits the single central record, which contains all this information, on a monthly basis to ensure that it is fit for purpose.
- Most of the pupils who spoke with inspectors reported that they feel safe and said that there are staff they would happily talk to if they had concerns. Most said that bullying was rare and dealt with swiftly if it did occur. One Year 11 pupil who spoke to the lead inspector said there was 'not much [bullying], if any'. This view is supported by pupils who responded to the pupil survey and the large majority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View. Moreover, all staff who responded to the staff survey agreed that bullying is dealt with effectively.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not universally have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, particularly those pupils who have complex or challenging backgrounds. As a result, the work that they set pupils is sometimes insufficiently challenging.
- Teachers do not routinely adapt tasks, or provide alternative resources, to suit pupils with different needs. Consequently, the least able do not receive the support they need to enable them to make rapid progress. For example, in one piece of work, a class of Year 11 pupils, including the most and least able, were expected to respond in the same way to an essay question. The less able did not receive any additional help to structure and organise their writing. Therefore, they were not able to get as much out of this task as the most able pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement. They do not exhibit enough enthusiasm for learning and intellectual curiosity. This is, in part, because teaching is not sufficiently engaging in some areas and because work is not tailored to their needs. This means that some pupils struggle, while more-able pupils are too easily bored.
- Teachers in different subject areas have strong curriculum knowledge. They are receptive to new ideas, keen to develop their practice and proactive about learning from each other. This results in organised, sequential planning of work over time, particularly in mathematics and physical education.
- Many teachers use questioning well to draw out what pupils know and stimulate further discussion. Where this is particularly effective, staff pose questions that encourage pupils to think more deeply and articulate considered, thoughtful opinions.
- Leaders' work to ensure that staff apply the school's feedback policy consistently across subjects is succeeding. Pupils are familiar with what is expected of them. This is because different subjects and teachers are using the same system to praise and advise pupils about how to improve their work. Teachers' advice in different subjects is practical and useful.
- Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff. They feel that teachers want them to succeed and provide help, often in their own time, to move them forward.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The school's careers programme is not taught in the most effective way. Teachers do not adapt activities that take place during tutor time for pupils of different ages. The teaching of the programme is not good enough. Furthermore, leaders have not evaluated the effectiveness of the programme to identify changes that are necessary.
- Pupils across the school are highly positive about the team of staff who provide support for their pastoral needs and well-being. One Year 11 pupil said, 'The pastoral care here is so good.' Another pupil said that staff are 'easy to talk to and very understanding. They don't judge you.'

- Pupils with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs who attend the Learning Enrichment Centre are well supported. As a result, they make strong academic progress from their starting points.
- The school is an orderly and calm place. However, some pupils do not respect the fabric of the building. This has resulted in damaged fixtures and fittings, such as bent locker doors. During the inspection, some toilets were closed because of vandalism.
- Pupils are generally confident and self-assured. During their time in the school they grow in these respects because staff nurture an open culture that supports their development. Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector were articulate, reflective and keen to express their views.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The attendance of particular groups of pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, has been below average over time. This is also the case for the increasing number of pupils who are persistently absent. Staff use a wide range of strategies to try to improve attendance, and are doggedly persistent. Although this work is improving the attendance of some pupils, it is not having sufficient impact on the attendance of persistent absentees.
- Leaders are aware that the volume of internal sanctions for poor behaviour has been high over time. Their evaluation of the use of sanctions has triggered a change in approach. Consequently, they place an increasing emphasis on positive, restorative measures to improve behaviour. However, this is a work in progress. Although there have been fewer sanctions overall this current academic year, the number of high-level sanctions, such as internal isolation, remains too high for disadvantaged pupils.
- The number of exclusions from school is reducing over time and has been below national averages for the last two years.
- Pupils are generally well behaved in lessons and around the school site. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons, bring the equipment they need and listen attentively to their teachers. However, their attitudes to learning are not good enough. Although they follow instructions and get down to tasks, they are compliant, rather than enthusiastic.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, the progress of pupils in Year 11 was below average in mathematics, science, languages and humanities. The progress of middle-ability pupils was also below average in each of these areas. Progress in science was below average for the second year running.
- For the last two years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been significantly below average in nearly every area of the curriculum. The school's current progress information indicates that these pupils are not making sufficiently rapid progress to catch up with their peers. The gaps are still too wide between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.

- The overall progress being made by current pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities shows little improvement on the progress made by pupils who left Year 11 in 2017. This is because teachers do not sufficiently match work and resources to pupils' needs.
- Pupils in the Learning Enrichment Centre make rapid progress, particularly in reading. In this environment, staff provide pupils with support planned for their individual needs and monitor their progress closely.
- The attainment of pupils achieving standard and strong passes in both English and mathematics in 2017 was broadly in line with average. Attainment was above average in English and English literature. Attainment in science, languages and humanities was below average.
- Pupils' achievement is higher in the 'open' element of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) suite of subjects. In 2016, pupils' progress was above average. In 2017, progress was in line with average. Pupils enjoy subjects with a more vocational edge, such as hair dressing, and achieve well.
- The work in pupils' books in key stage 3 and information provided by the school indicate that these pupils are making better progress than pupils in key stage 4. This position is also recognised in governing board minutes from the end of January.
- The majority of pupils in the school take pride in their work and present it well. Across different subjects, most pupils set work out neatly, write legibly and want to build on their achievements over time.
- In 2017, the achievement of students with different prior attainment studying A levels was in line with the national average.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is well led. The sixth-form coordinator is strongly supported by other capable members of the sixth-form leadership team. Together, leaders have a sharp oversight of the range of provision for students and ensure that it enables students to make good academic and pastoral progress.
- Leaders have high expectations of students and set ambitious targets for them. Effective systems are in place to enable leaders to track students' progress closely and intervene, when necessary, to bolster progress.
- A broad range of activities provide students with a rich, diverse and fulfilling school experience and a suitable preparation for life after school. Many students participate in sports, music and Duke of Edinburgh's award activities. They frequently learn about radicalisation, relationships, healthy lifestyles and mental well-being. Students also participate in work-related learning activity in Year 12 and their employability skills are formally accredited.
- Students value the high level of support and guidance they receive in their studies. Students, including those who face specific barriers to learning, such as disadvantage, receive effective help to catch up if they fall behind.
- Overall attendance in the sixth form is good. It is better than it is in the main school.
- Students make good progress in their different courses. Over time, the progress made

by students following academic courses such as A levels has been consistently above average. In 2017, the progress of these students was in line with average.

- The progress made by students following applied courses was below average in 2017. Leaders responded swiftly to this underachievement and have taken action to ensure that this underperformance is not repeated. Current students who are studying BTEC sport, which was the key weakness in 2017, now follow a course that better meets their needs.
- Safeguarding procedures and practices are as effective in the sixth form, a separate block on the campus, as in the main school. Students report that they feel safe and are taught to manage risk and make wise choices.

School details

Unique reference number	136569
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10043559

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	1381
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	271
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Graeme Cock
Principal	Paul Collins
Telephone number	01364 652230
Website	www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk/
Email address	pcollins@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 November 2013

Information about this school

- The principal took up post in January 2018. Previously he had been head of the main school (Years 7–11) for two years.
- The previous executive principal, who was also the chief executive of the South Dartmoor multi-academy trust, to which the school belongs, retired at Christmas 2017. The new chief executive of the multi-academy trust took up post in January 2018. The executive principal role has ceased to exist.
- The principal restructured leadership in January 2018. New vice-principal roles were introduced, along with faculty leaders. These middle leaders line-manage leaders of individual subjects.

- The number of girls in the school is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who receive support is higher than average, as is the proportion of pupils who have SEN with a statement or an education, health and care plan.
- The level of local deprivation is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in a range of subjects and across year groups. Some observations were jointly conducted with school staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal and other senior leaders, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the chief executive of the South Dartmoor multi-academy trust and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation and development plans. They also scrutinised records relating to the monitoring of teaching, behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 207 responses to the Parent View survey, 26 responses to the staff survey and 31 responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deirdre Fitzpatrick	Ofsted Inspector
Kay Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Neville Coles	Ofsted Inspector

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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.

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