

Pilton Community College

Chaddiford Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1RB

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics in 2017 and 2018 was below the national average. The school has recently begun to address this issue but there remains a legacy of underachievement.
- Disadvantaged pupils underachieve relative to others nationally and have done so over time.
- Teaching requires improvement because in some subjects, including science, not enough teaching is engaging, exciting and challenging.
- On occasions, there is low-level disruption. Teachers do not consistently follow the recently introduced behaviour policy.
- Teachers do not routinely adapt work and activities for the needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, including those who are disadvantaged. This limits pupils' aspirations.
- The actions of trustees and the local governing board have not brought about improvements in standards quickly enough. Recent changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher and the restructuring of the senior leadership team, have generated strong capacity for improvement, but they have not had time to have a significant impact on the lack of progress made by many pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has the strong support of parents and carers, staff, pupils and governors, and is already having a positive impact on the school's work.
- Senior leaders have comprehensive and coherent plans to bring about improvements.
- The new leadership team is working hard to raise expectations across the school. The curriculum is being reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils behave well around the school, including at break and lunchtime. They are polite and courteous towards adults and each other.
- Better systems for checking pupils' progress and setting targets have been introduced to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders check rigorously that recently introduced measures to improve the quality of teaching happen in practice and have a demonstrable impact
 - teachers are given opportunities to develop their skills in checking pupils' understanding in order to adapt teaching to pupils' needs and thus enable them to make more rapid progress
 - teachers and middle leaders are consistent in their use of assessment information to monitor the progress of groups of pupils more effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), by ensuring that in all subjects:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers plan learning activities which stretch and challenge all pupils appropriately and engage them in their learning
 - gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed.
- Improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - ensuring that the new behaviour policy is applied consistently across the school
 - continuing to improve the attendance of all pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not been successful in improving the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' progress so that standards of attainment rise consistently across the curriculum. Until recently, leaders have not set high enough expectations for staff of what pupils can achieve.
- The quality of teaching varies too much across the school. However, the leadership of teaching is improving, and teachers are beginning to share good practice. Training for staff is now closely aligned to the development priorities of the school. Where outcomes for pupils are less than good, leaders provide support to enable teachers to improve their skills. Governors have supported the headteacher to make difficult staffing decisions when the quality of teaching has not been good enough.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2018. He is determined to improve the quality of education in the school and raise pupils' achievement. He has made a number of positive changes, many linked to the structure of the leadership teams. There are signs that these are starting to take effect. However, the evidence of their impact on pupils' progress and attainment is only beginning to be seen.
- Members of the senior leadership team, including the headteacher, enjoy the strong support of the academy trust. They are now beginning to work more autonomously as confidence in their leadership grows.
- Senior and middle leaders are monitoring teaching and learning appropriately through lesson observations, analysis of information on pupil progress and the examination of pupils' work. However, they are not all evaluating robustly the impact of teaching on pupils' progress in order to identify and support the needs of pupils.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced in both key stages. It includes appropriate vocational and academic subjects and is enhanced by a range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs and activities.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND is used to support their social and emotional needs, but it has not yet led to better outcomes for these pupils. The headteacher has plans in place to improve the quality of special needs education in the school.
- Pupils receive good-quality careers information, advice and guidance which help them to make appropriate choices for post-16 employment, education or training. This begins in Year 7 and builds as pupils move up through the school.
- Parents are supportive of the school's work and many expressed their confidence in the new headteacher. Leaders are aware that communication between the school and parents has not been good in the past and they are working hard to make improvements.
- The school has drawn on a range of external support for its improvement work. As a result, appropriate systems and staffing are now in place to accelerate the pace of improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not acted quickly enough to bring about the changes required to ensure that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and fulfil their potential.
- However, governors are now more involved in the work of the school and have a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Leaders of the trust and members of the local governing board have taken difficult decisions in order to improve leadership at all levels. As a result, confidence in the future of the school has been renewed.
- Governors now provide increasing levels of challenge, with strong encouragement from the headteacher and the chief executive officer. They recognise the need for robust accountability and receive regular reports on the school's progress from both middle and senior leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a highly effective safeguarding culture in the school. All policies and procedures are up to date and reflect the latest national guidance. Appropriate checks are made on all staff to make sure they are suitable to work with children. Senior leaders make safeguarding a priority. They fully meet their statutory responsibilities. They keep detailed records of any concerns that are raised by staff and any subsequent action that is taken.
- Leaders are confident, knowledgeable and tenacious in their pursuit of safety. Training for all staff is regular and up to date. Work with a wide range of external agencies is highly effective.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and whom to talk to if they have any concerns regarding their safety. They have a good understanding of keeping safe online and are aware of the risks of sexual exploitation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies too much across the school and within departments. Leaders' raised expectations and staff training are leading to improvements, but teaching does not ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- Teaching does not routinely meet pupils' differing needs. Consequently, the least able do not receive the support they need to enable them to make rapid progress and the most able are not sufficiently challenged.
- Where teaching is more effective, teachers plan activities to meet the needs of all pupils. They stretch and challenge pupils of all abilities so that they all make good progress. Where planning is not thorough, and activities are not appropriately challenging, pupils make less progress.
- Teachers do not systematically address gaps in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. This means that some pupils fall behind in their learning and are not able to catch up.

- Most teachers provide pupils with feedback in line with the school's policy but the impact on pupils' learning is too inconsistent. Senior leaders are aware of this and are addressing the issue more effectively.
- As a result of the appointment of a new head of department, pupils' progress in mathematics is improving rapidly. Strong and effective support for teachers of English is also having an impact and this can be seen in the recent work in pupils' books.
- Leaders acknowledge that pupils' work has not been rigorously assessed in the past. A great deal of work has been done to ensure that assessment practices are more consistent across the school. Moderation exercises, including work with other schools, are helping to ensure that teachers are able to assess work more accurately. Opportunities are being taken for teachers to visit primary schools in the trust to improve their understanding of the key stage 2 curriculum and its links with their teaching at key stage 3.
- 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 is good.
- Pupils are safe and well cared for. A comprehensive personal development programme covers all aspects of pupils' well-being. This is reinforced through assemblies. Pupils show a good understanding of, for example, the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, how to avoid sexual exploitation, the risks involved in using the internet and social networking sites, and other risks to their physical, emotional and mental well-being.
- Pupils, and their parents, mainly report that the school looks after them well. If bullying occurs, it is dealt with by staff. Pupils know whom to go to if they need to discuss any concerns and are confident that these will be dealt with sensitively and effectively.
- A good programme of careers guidance and events throughout all years means that pupils are well informed about the options available to them when they leave the school at age 16.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps them to reflect upon, and take responsibility for, their actions as good citizens. They discuss moral issues in lessons and take part in a variety of social and cultural events.
- A small number of pupils are educated elsewhere. School leaders are careful to check that these pupils attend regularly and are making good progress in their learning and development.
- Pupils in the Communications and Interaction Resource Base are well cared for and make good progress. Activities are well matched to their needs and they are fully supported in accessing lessons in the main school. The base provides a nurturing environment where pupils thrive.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- 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.
- A new behaviour policy has recently been put in place. Pupils say that it works well but teachers do not always use it consistently. Leaders are working hard to embed it into the day-to-day operation of the school.
- Pupils do not always take pride in their work. The work of boys in particular is too often untidy, not presented well and contains gaps. This is not always dealt with effectively by teachers and inhibits pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attendance is just below national averages. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND have lower attendance than their peers. Leaders are now giving much higher priority to attendance and have introduced better systems for tracking and monitoring individual pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017 and 2018, the progress of pupils in Year 11 was well below average in English, mathematics, science, humanities and languages. Pupils of all abilities underperformed.
- The new headteacher is acutely aware that pupils should be making better progress overall. He is taking decisive action to raise standards. Although it is too soon to see any real impact on pupils' outcomes, inspectors could see some positive signs of improvement.
- For the last three years, the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been significantly below average in nearly every area of the curriculum. Scrutiny and analysis of pupils' work indicate that these pupils are not making sufficiently rapid progress to catch up with their peers.
- Current pupils do not make strong progress in all year groups across a wide range of subjects. Overall, current pupils, particularly those in the younger years, make more progress than indicated by the school's previous examination results, but this is not consistent for all year groups and in all subjects.
- The attainment of key stage 4 pupils achieving standard and strong passes in both English and mathematics in 2018 was below the national average.
- The quality of pupils' work and their progress are much stronger in subjects such as art, computing, history, beliefs and values and German. The quality of work is below where it should be in some classes in all year groups in English, science and French.
- Many of the most able pupils, including the small number who are disadvantaged, do not make the progress of which they are capable in a range of subjects. They are not challenged by teachers to do as well as they can. They are not encouraged to think deeply, provide explanations that show the full extent of their knowledge, or apply their understanding to develop greater depth or breadth.

- The majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, successfully move on to local colleges to follow a wide range of academic and vocational courses.

School details

Unique reference number	136867
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10088241

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 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mark Cartmell
Headteacher	Graham Hill
Telephone number	01271 374 381
Website	www.piltoncollege.org.uk
Email address	admin@piltoncollege.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 October 2017

Information about this school

- Pilton Community College, a converter academy, became part of The Primary Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust, on 1 August 2016. The trust was then renamed and became Ventrus. At this time, a local governing body was established, responsible to the board of trustees.
- The school is larger than the average-sized 11 to 16 secondary school.
- The school hosts the Communications and Interaction Resource Base catering for eight pupils with autism.
- The school makes use of two alternative providers. Currently a few pupils, who are dual registered, spend time at Petroc College; a small number attend part-time at the Shoreline Academy.
- The proportion of pupils in the school eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportions identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and

those with an education, health and care plan are both above the national average.

- A very small proportion of pupils are from other than White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language.
- The school has received support from a range of providers including Babcock, the Roseland Academy and the Cabot Academy Learning Federation.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 38 lessons. They visited classrooms, often with school leaders, in all year groups and across a wide range of subjects. They observed tutor time at the start of the day. In lessons, inspectors looked at pupils' work and discussed it with them. Inspectors also looked at a wider sample of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, the trust's director of school improvement, governors and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including information on pupils' outcomes, the school's self-evaluation, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records relating to the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, behaviour, attendance, exclusion and the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 83 responses to the Parent View online survey, including 80 with additional comments. They also took account of the pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct at break- and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

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Katherine Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Burgess	Ofsted Inspector
Carol Hannaford	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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