

Inspection of a good school: South Molton Community College

Old Alswear Road, South Molton, Devon EX36 4LA

Inspection dates:

10–11 December 2019

Outcome

South Molton Community College continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The principal has a clear vision for this school. He wants pupils to try new things with a positive attitude. He encourages pupils to think: 'I can do it, just not yet.' The school's motto of 'be ready, be resilient, be respectful' reflects this attitude. A committed, enthusiastic staff team provides good support to the principal.

Pupils are very well behaved, respectful and keen to learn. In lessons, pupils are attentive. Teachers know the pupils well. This means that pupils get the support they need. Pupils say they feel safe and know that there are staff who will listen to them if they have any concerns. If bullying happens, staff deal with it quickly.

Parents and carers value the quality of care their children receive. One parent spoke for many in saying: 'Staff respond to the children with grace and respect. Staff are caring and kind across the board from caretakers to kitchen staff, receptionists to the principal.'

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education remains good. Leaders have established a curriculum that is well thought out. It provides pupils with the skills and knowledge they need to become productive members of the local community. It encourages them to be aspirational about their futures. Leaders ensure that curriculum plans show what pupils need to learn. Some subject plans are more detailed than others. Where plans are clear and precise, for example in English and geography, pupils know, understand and remember more. In a small minority of subjects, plans are not well written. In these subjects, pupils are not consistently able to make connections in what they learn.

A key strength of the school is how well staff know individual pupils. The school has a strong ethos of respect and tolerance. Pupils are clear about the need to treat everyone equally. High levels of appreciation of others are evident across the school. Pupils want to learn, and they work hard in lessons. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and low-level disruption is rare. Teachers establish clear routines in lessons. This,

combined with well-planned lessons, results in excellent behaviour in class.

The number of pupils undertaking the English Baccalaureate qualification is below the national average. This is largely due to low take-up of modern foreign languages in key stage 4. Leaders are aware of the need to improve the curriculum in this department at key stage 3. Currently, pupils do not have enough confidence to choose languages as an option in key stage 4.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do well. Most teachers plan appropriate learning experiences to support them effectively. Staff use the personalised plans for pupils with SEND to make sure that the curriculum meets their needs.

Provision for pupils' personal development is effective. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) has a high priority in the school. Pupils learn about PSHE through timetabled lessons, registration periods and assemblies. This helps pupils to take a responsible interest in the world around them. Pastoral support for pupils is effective. A member of staff has a dedicated role to support pupils' mental health. Pupils say that staff cater for their mental health well.

Leaders and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's governors work alongside leaders to offer appropriate support and challenge. School leaders are highly visible around the school. They know the pupils and staff individually. Staff are highly motivated and report that they like working at the school. They say they feel valued and that leaders work with them to ensure that their workload is manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The training of staff and governors in safeguarding policies and procedures is comprehensive. Leaders make sure that all staff refresh their training regularly. Training enables staff to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and to identify a child at risk. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and take them very seriously. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding.

School leaders work effectively with parents, carers and external agencies. Leaders provide effective early help to pupils and families to prevent problems from escalating. They work closely with outside agencies by raising any child protection issues swiftly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not planned well enough. In these subjects, there is no clear sequence to learning. There is also a lack of precision about the knowledge and key concepts that teachers want pupils to gain. Where this is the

case, pupils find it hard to connect their learning. This prevents them from building on what they already know. Leaders need to share strong practice in other subjects so that there is a consistently effective curriculum across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged South Molton Community College to be good on 18–19 November 2015.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	113512
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10058429
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	619
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Redpath
Principal	David Lewis
Website	http://www.smcc.devon.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	18–19 November 2015

Information about this school

- The principal took up his post in September 2019 after a year as acting principal.
- The school moved into a new building in 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the principal, three assistant vice-principals and governors. We also met with a range of teaching and support staff.
- We did deep dives in: modern foreign languages, geography, history and English. This involved meetings with curriculum leaders, visiting classrooms, meeting teachers and talking to pupils about their work.
- To inspect safeguarding, we checked the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. We looked at the school's safeguarding policy and interviewed the member of staff designated as the safeguarding lead. We spoke to a range of staff and pupils.
- We considered the surveys of the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff as part

of the inspection.

Inspection team

Mark Burgess, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

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