

Inspection of South Dartmoor Community College

Balland Lane, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7EW

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend an improving school. Older pupils and sixth-form students recognise the improvements and say that they now have a much better experience. Pupils are responding well to the high expectations that leaders set for them. Most pupils are keen to get on with their learning and do the best they can.

Students in the sixth form receive an ambitious curriculum. Elsewhere, leaders are securing necessary improvements to the quality of education pupils receive. However, many changes are new. The curriculum is not yet fully developed. As a result, pupils do not gain all the knowledge they should in every subject.

Pupils' behaviour is calm and orderly. Pupils are courteous to each other and to staff. Most pupils follow school routines unprompted. For example, they go back to lessons at the end of social times and start work straight away.

Pupils are happy at this school and enjoy attending. They feel safe and respected. Bullying does not happen often. When it does, pupils trust staff to deal with it well. Pupils are usually tolerant of each other. They learn about difference and the need for mutual respect. They enjoy discussing their learning and feel comfortable sharing their own views.

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

Leaders' actions are resulting in noticeable improvements over time. Parents, pupils and staff agree. Leaders have a strong understanding of the school's effectiveness. While improving, they know that the quality of education some pupils receive is not good enough yet.

Leaders' recent work to improve the curriculum is paying off. They use the advice from central trust staff astutely. Learning now happens in a logical order. Leaders have begun to consider which knowledge is essential for pupils to learn. Nonetheless, it is early days. For example, leaders know that there are some subject curriculums that do not set out clearly what pupils should know by the end of Year 9. This means that teaching does not provide pupils with the most useful knowledge to prepare them for their next stage of learning in Years 10 and 11.

Sequences of work challenge sixth-form students and build on what they already know. However, some sequences of work do not demand enough of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. When this happens, pupils do not learn as much as they could. The guidance teachers give to these pupils does not always make it clear how they can get better at the subjects they study. This slows pupils' learning down.

The number of pupils who continue to take a language and a humanities subject at GCSE is increasing. This means that more pupils will take the subjects that make up

the English Baccalaureate. Sixth-form students have many different course choices, both academic and vocational.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have the support they need. Staff know pupils' individual needs and understand how best to help them, including in the resource base and in the sixth form.

Leaders' actions to improve the reading of all pupils are starting to have an impact. Those who are not fluent readers get the support they need. Recent training is helping staff to know how to support reading in all subjects.

Leaders have done much good work to improve pupils' learning attitudes. Clear classroom routines mean pupils know what to expect in lessons. However, a few pupils say that they hear unacceptable language used by their peers outside lessons. Poor behaviour in lessons is rare. When it does happen, staff manage it well and it does not interrupt learning for long. Pupils listen to their peers and are respectful towards them, even when they disagree.

Leaders have developed a strong curriculum to support personal development. Pupils value what they learn about different cultures, faiths and life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about healthy relationships at the right time. However, the sixth-form curriculum for personal development is not as thorough as it is for younger pupils.

Careers education is a strength. Visits by, and to, employers and universities help pupils to understand more about future opportunities. Older pupils and sixth-form students receive individual guidance. This helps them make decisions about their futures. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Pupils have many opportunities to discover new passions and develop existing interests. Leaders make sure that pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged have extra support to take part. The voluntary work that sixth-form students do helps them develop their skills and interests.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders respond to changes in the pattern of safeguarding concerns. For example, they change staff roles and adapt the curriculum so that they are better able to reduce the risk of harm to pupils. Leaders are tenacious in their work with other agencies and they challenge decisions in the best interest of pupils.

Training gives staff the information they need to identify safeguarding concerns and about how to report them. They are also aware of local and national factors which may put young people at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Much of the curriculum is new and not yet fully embedded. Not all teachers are clear about what knowledge they need to teach. This means they do not always teach pupils the most useful knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all areas of the curriculum are clear about intended learning and the end points pupils need to reach to be well prepared for their next stage.
- Some sequences of learning are not demanding enough. This means pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Leaders need to ensure that the sequences of work pupils learn are challenging enough to extend their learning over time.
- Teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do consistently well. They are not always clear about how pupils in key stage 3 can deepen their knowledge and make progress. Leaders need to assure themselves that teaching provides clarity to pupils about how they can improve their knowledge and understanding and get better at the subjects they study.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 the school and 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	136569
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10211720
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	876
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	123
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Jen Veal
Website	www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	7–8 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specialist resource base for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school uses three alternative providers.
- The school is part of Westcountry Schools Trust. This is a multi-academy trust of 27 schools, of which 8 are secondary schools and 19 are primary schools.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account into their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, trustees and the director of education for the trust.
- Meetings were held with curriculum leaders, heads of year, teachers (including early career teachers) and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. Inspectors contacted the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, geography, English and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online survey.
- An inspector visited the resource base which is part of the school.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen McShane	Her Majesty's Inspector
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