

Inspection of Honiton Community College

School Lane, Honiton, Devon EX14 1QT

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 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

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Honiton Community College is an improving school. Pupils, parents and staff all remark on the recent improvements they have seen in behaviour. Pupils are benefiting from the calm and settled atmosphere that leaders have brought about. Leaders have begun work to improve the curriculum. However, there is more to do before everyone can learn successfully.

Leaders take a keen interest in pupils' views, especially around issues such as bullying and the culture of the school. They encourage pupils to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Leaders act quickly in the light of any incidents reported. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, value the support they receive from staff. They describe a welcoming culture in which everyone is accepted for who they are. Pupils take a sense of belonging from teaming up with others. For example, pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs enjoy learning together at the on-site forest school.

There are many opportunities for keeping fit through sports and games. Some pupils complete Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. Fundraising events are a regular feature of the school calendar. For example, pupils raised money for the Samaritans through a school-wide 'Bake Off'.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. In key stage 3, they have introduced a new, more rigorous curriculum. The curriculum is designed to help pupils to remember more of what they learn. Leaders want to prepare pupils more effectively for the challenges of GCSE. Currently, the proportion of pupils achieving the English baccalaureate is low.

Nonetheless, in many subjects, it is too early to see the full impact of recent curriculum developments. This is because, at the time of the inspection, pupils and staff were getting to grips with new learning materials. Leaders recognise that teachers do not always check pupils' understanding effectively. They have begun to provide training for staff. Some pupils do not fully grasp important ideas, or the meaning of key vocabulary. These pupils find it hard to follow the curriculum due to their insecure knowledge. By contrast, in the sixth form, the curriculum is well established. Here students are supported with any gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Some pupils do not learn as much as they could because they struggle with the reading demands of the curriculum. Leaders do not provide enough opportunity for pupils to practise their reading and gain fluency. In English, pupils are supported to read increasingly complex texts. Beyond this, however, pupils do not read widely.

Pupils in the early stages of reading do not receive the regular teaching in phonics that they need.

The school has a large number of pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans. Their plans include long-term goals. However, leaders have not thought enough about the small steps pupils will need to take to achieve these. Teachers are not sure how they can best help individual pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not secure essential knowledge well enough because the curriculum is not adapted to meet their needs.

Leaders have raised expectations of pupils' conduct. Pupils know what is expected of them, both in lessons and as they move around the school. Pupils learn in a purposeful and focused environment. Students in the sixth form support younger pupils in lessons. They told inspectors that behaviour around the school has improved significantly in recent months. Staff, including teachers at the start of their careers, are able to focus on teaching the curriculum due to the effective leadership of behaviour.

Many pupils would be the first in their family to attend university. Leaders organise an aspirational programme which helps pupils to consider a degree, or an apprenticeship, as a route into their preferred career. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause. Pupils and students in the sixth form go on residential visits to universities, near and far. Leaders encourage and support pupils to undertake ambitious work experience placements. All of this helps pupils to realise their plans.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development effectively. Pupils receive regular briefings on matters arising in the school. This helps everyone to understand what leaders are doing to keep them safe and how they can contribute to a positive school culture. Pupils uphold fundamental British values. They respect one another's differences. Pupils report that the school helps them to take care of their emotional well-being.

The trustees provide knowledgeable and confident leadership. They have a clear vision and strategy for the school. They ask searching questions, holding leaders to account for their impact. Staff are optimistic about the improvements they are seeing in behaviour and curriculum planning. They recognise leaders' efforts to reduce workload and promote their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a good overview of safeguarding issues in the school. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, receive clear messages about how to keep themselves and others safe.

There has been a whole-school response to the findings of Ofsted's review into sexual harassment and abuse in schools. Leaders have sought to understand pupils' experiences. They have responded effectively to what they have learned.

Staff undertake appropriate training and are vigilant. They use the school's system for recording concerns well. Leaders meet regularly with safeguarding partners. This helps them to get timely help to families in need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teaching does not do enough to identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge and address these. Pupils move on to new content before they have secured the important knowledge they need. Leaders should ensure that pupils' understanding is checked systematically and that any misconceptions are rectified promptly.
- The curriculum is not designed to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils often find it difficult to apply new learning because their understanding is insecure. Leaders should help teachers to adapt the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can learn the most important content successfully.
- Reading, including support for pupils who are in the early stages of reading, does not have a high enough priority within the school. Pupils do not read widely or confidently. There is not a sharp enough focus on ensuring that pupils with gaps in their knowledge of phonics are identified and given the help they need. Leaders should ensure that all pupils read widely and well.

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.

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	136912
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10210918
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	738
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	48
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chair of Trust
Principal	Alex Kirkbride
Website	www.honitoncommunitycollege.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 March to 27 April 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new principal and chair of governors joined the school in September 2022.
- The proportion of pupils with an EHC plan is well above average.
- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, members of the senior leadership team, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator. The lead inspector met with a group of trustees, including the chair of the Honiton Community College Academy Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record and met with the DSL and deputy DSL. Inspectors also considered policies and records. They held discussions with pupils and staff in order to evaluate the culture of safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

Lydia Pride, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Lou Blundell	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Hickling	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Watson	Ofsted Inspector

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