

Inspection of Dartmouth Academy

Milton Lane, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9HW

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 April 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy at Dartmouth Academy. They embrace the school's mantra to 'be your best self'. As a small, all-through school, pupils and staff value the strong relationships they have. Pupils join the school at different stages. Leaders support pupils at those different transition points. Pupils say they feel welcomed at the school.

Despite the size of the school, leaders ensure there is a broad range of clubs for pupils to have new experiences. Leaders work with the community or other schools to plan events and trips. Leaders check all pupils can make the most of these opportunities. Pupils can learn to sail, and many participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. There are various opportunities for pupil leadership in both phases of the school. For example, primary house captains show their school off to visitors with pride.

Leaders are clear about why some outcomes are not as high as they could be. They have taken steps to address this. In lessons, pupils focus on their learning. They are respectful to one another. As a small school, they know one another well.

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

Working alongside the trust, leaders have implemented a well-sequenced curriculum. Beginning in the Nursery and Reception classes, this prepares children well for their formal learning. However, in key stage 3, some subject curriculums are still being developed for Year 8 and Year 9. This means there is some variation in the sequencing of the curriculum.

In the early years, teachers carefully track children's progress through the curriculum. They ensure children experience strong interactions and communication that support them at their own development stage.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils to be well prepared for the next stages of their education. At key stage 4, more pupils are studying the academic subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. As a result, pupils are more prepared to follow their chosen pathways at post-16.

Leaders ensure there is a systematic reading programme in place to support pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. In the primary phase, some pupils are over-supported to help them keep up with the pace of the programme. This means pupils become dependent on this help and make slower progress. In the secondary phase, leaders track pupils who have not secured their reading. They provide reading intervention to help pupils catch up with their peers. In key stage 3, pupils read regularly in a mixed-year tutor reading programme. Older pupils model reading aloud a novel chosen by the class.

Staff have the information they need to provide appropriate support and adaptation for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders plan relevant and bespoke training so staff have the strategies and knowledge to understand pupils' barriers to learning. This ensures all pupils access and learn the same curriculum knowledge and content.

Teachers routinely plan for pupils to recall their previous learning. They help pupils to consolidate their knowledge and apply it to new learning. Pupils understand what the important knowledge is they need to know. However, sometimes during retrieval activities, some pupils do not concentrate on recalling their learning as effectively as they should.

Leaders have raised the expectations for learning in the classroom. Pupils respect and follow these well. In lessons, pupils focus on their learning. In the primary phase, there is a range of ways used to signal behaviour expectations. This means there is less clarity. Leaders are working with staff to improve this.

Pupils across all phases learn about different career choices. Employers and speakers at the school engage with different year groups in a meaningful way. Older pupils learn about further education, technical pathways and apprenticeships. They are well prepared when making choices for the next phase of learning. All pupils learn a well-planned curriculum for personal, social and health education. Pupils learn about difference and respect in an age-appropriate way.

Recent appointments to leadership at different levels have enhanced the capacity and skill across the school. With the support of the trust, governors provide accountability and challenge to leaders. Staff feel there is a well-structured and broad programme of relevant professional development. This extends to working with colleagues across the trust. They are confident leaders consider workload and well-being in their planning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the pupils, their families and the community well. Staff feel confident in the training they receive. As a result, they are vigilant in identifying and reporting potential safeguarding needs. Leaders act promptly on reports. They show no hesitation in working and liaising with external agencies to ensure vulnerable pupils and their families receive support.

Leaders make sure pupils have a good awareness of risk, both personally and online. Pupils feel confident to seek help and guidance if they need it. Leaders help pupils to look after their mental health. They feel safe and well informed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff over-support some younger pupils who are in the early stages of learning to read. This leads to a few pupils becoming dependent on the support of staff when they are practising their reading. They have less opportunity to rehearse their reading. These pupils do not secure their reading as quickly as they could. Leaders need to make sure pupils understand the expectations and support doesn't reduce pupils' learning.
- In some subjects at the end of key stage 3, the curriculum is in development. This means the sequencing of the curriculum is not fully in place. As a result, teachers are adapting the curriculum as it moves from a three-year plan to a two-year plan. Leaders need to ensure the curriculum is planned and sequenced so pupils follow an all-through curriculum.

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	136200
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10268544
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kellie Knott
Principal	Paul Girardot
Website	www.dartmouthacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The academy is a small all-through school for pupils aged three to 16. It is part of the Education South West multi-academy trust.
- The school has a Nursery that admits three-year-olds.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses three registered alternative provisions and five unregistered provisions.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of work.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, school leaders, subject leaders, trustees, trust leaders and members of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and examined the school's safeguarding records. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and Ofsted's online pupil survey

Inspection team

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