



# Stoke Damerel Community College

## Inspection Report

---

**Unique Reference Number** 113547  
**Local Authority** Plymouth  
**Inspection number** 289671  
**Inspection dates** 31 January –1 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Nasim Butt

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Somerset Place
<b>School category</b>	Community		Stoke
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Plymouth PL3 4BD
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 556065
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1185	<b>Fax number</b>	01752 605714
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	216	<b>Chair</b>	Elizabeth Seneviratne
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Headteacher</b>	Carol Hannaford
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 March 2002		

---

<b>Age group</b> 11–18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 31 January –1 February 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 289671
---------------------------	--	------------------------------------

---

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Stoke Damerel Community College has been a designated specialist school for mathematics and computing since 2004. It is larger than average, and a designated centre for visually impaired students. The majority of its students are from White British backgrounds, although the number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has more than doubled over the past four years. Many of the students who attend the school come from areas of Plymouth identified as having high levels of social deprivation. The number of students with statements of special educational need is higher than the national average. The school plays an active role as a member of the Confederation and the Tamar Valley Consortium, broadening post-16 vocational options and leading in regional school improvement initiatives.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Stoke Damerel Community College is a good school with many outstanding features; it delivers good value for money. Although standards are slightly below average, students make good progress both in the main school and sixth form. Generally, girls make better progress than boys in the main school. Effective strategies have been put in place to close this achievement gap and these are already having the desired impact. Bearing in mind the starting points of these students, achievement by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form is good overall.

The personal development of students is good and, through exemplary citizenship activities, they make outstanding contributions to the community. The vast majority of students behave well and show positive attitudes to learning. Students work hard and are keen to succeed. The strong work ethic in the school promotes high expectations. Excellent partnerships with the local community are having a very positive impact on the well-being of students. Teaching is good, with the quality of assessment being a particular strength. However, literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is, as yet, underdeveloped and the impact of measures taken yet to be evaluated. The curriculum is good in nearly all respects and outstanding in the sixth form, where a wide range of academic and vocational courses have resulted in very high retention rates. The management of the specialist school status has been particularly effective in developing an effective curriculum which has been of great benefit to a broad range of students. However, there has been insufficient impact on the teaching of numeracy in subjects across the curriculum to reinforce what is learned in specialist mathematics lessons. The care, support and guidance for students in the main school are outstanding and good in the sixth form. This contributes significantly to their overall development and enjoyment of school. As one highly satisfied parent remarked, 'I have to say the help and support we received from the school was exemplary...In my opinion, my son is in the best school there is.' The school does not take sufficient steps to monitor the attendance of students in the sixth form.

The principal provides outstanding leadership supported by a very competent senior leadership team. They promote equality of opportunities very well and ensure that the school operates at a high level of efficiency. They provide excellent guidance and support to staff at all levels. This is instrumental in improving communication throughout the school and maintaining high standards of achievement and self-evaluation. The school's capacity to improve is good.

The school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Effective strategies have been put in place to combat the underachievement of some boys in Key Stages 3 and 4, and there is evidence that these have begun to have the desired impact. The school is passionate about the work it is doing to raise achievement and aspirations of all its students. It is keen to ensure that it continues to develop its commitment to every student. It has made good progress in the few areas identified for improvement in the last inspection and is well placed to make further progress.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

This is an inclusive sixth form with a very high retention rate. The curriculum is outstanding because it is highly responsive to the needs of all students. It provides a wide range of post-16 courses through close cooperation with a consortium of local schools. Teaching and learning are good with opportunities for enrichment and a successful drive to encourage independent learning. Students enjoy their learning and make many positive contributions to school life, notably in their mentoring role with younger students. Personal development is good and students value the support they are given. They also value the support given during induction and when making decisions about future progression routes. Regular monitoring of achievement ensures that students make good progress, particularly in the broad range of vocational courses on offer. All of these strengths confirm the good leadership and management of the sixth form.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and achievement further by developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and evaluating the impact of implementation.
- Improve management systems for recording and monitoring attendance in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enter school with standards that are below average. By the end of Year 11, standards are close to the national average and students make good progress and improve more than would be expected bearing in mind their starting points. This is evidence of good achievement. At the end of Year 9, standards are below average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in the sixth form are average and achievement is good, particularly in the wide range of vocational courses on offer. The trend throughout the school is one of continuous improvement.

In Year 9, mathematics and science results remain better than English, although all have improved. The school understands the reasons why there has been less progress made in English between Years 7 and 9, and has implemented a revised curriculum and more focused teaching to bring about improved standards. Generally, girls make better progress than boys. Effective strategies have been put in place by the school to close this achievement gap, which have begun to have the desired impact. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds make good progress and achieve well. The school sets itself challenging targets which are, in the main, met by most students. However, standards in literacy and numeracy, although improving, are still too low and a barrier to students making even better progress, particularly between Years 7 to 9 where progress remains satisfactory.

The school analyses results carefully and has introduced effective changes to help students do better in the future. For example, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form they have introduced a wide range of courses that better meet students' needs. In the sixth form results in vocational courses are particularly good and the positive impact of information and communication technology (ICT) is evident around the school. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and visually impaired and looked after children, all make good progress. Students say they enjoy their education at the school and feel they are being appropriately challenged by their teachers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Personal development and well-being, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students have excellent relationships with staff, characterised by mutual respect. Spiritual development is less strong than other aspects, with responsibility a notable strength. Students take full advantage of the excellent, structured opportunities, for example as peer mediators, lead learners or through the junior management team. Older students, particularly girls, are outstanding examples of active citizens in the school and the wider community.

Students are very aware of how to eat healthily and choose well. The school offers many extra-curricular sporting activities, although there is only one compulsory hour of sport for older students and many students do no more than this. Students' behaviour is generally good. They are considerate and attentive to safety, for example holding doors and walking sensibly in crowded corridors. However, a small minority of students and almost one quarter of parents who returned the questionnaire expressed concerns about behaviour.

Ninety nine per cent of students progressed to education or employment at age 16 in 2006. They are ready for life beyond school, although their standards of literacy and numeracy remain too low. Attendance is below average and the school is actively engaged in combating this. There are early signs of slight improvement, although it is too soon to fully assess the impact of this. In the sixth form, information gathered from the different sites is not easily available in one place, making it harder to monitor and use to secure improvements.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. In the most effective lessons there is good planning and organisation and students clearly understand what they are expected to learn. A varied range of activities and teaching methods ensures that

students are fully involved. The independent use by students of computers helps to focus interest and some teachers use interactive whiteboards very imaginatively to stimulate learning. Students are encouraged to evaluate what they have learned and they are given a clear indication of how they can improve over time. There is good feedback to students during lessons on how they can improve and they make good progress over time. On the occasions where learning is less effective, the pace is slow or students are over directed and not encouraged enough to become independent. In the sixth form there is a strong emphasis on students' independence and teachers take sensitive account of students' preferred ways of learning.

Low literacy levels have been a barrier to students' progress but corrective reading, spelling and other literacy programmes have been introduced for selected students in Years 7 to 9 to raise standards. Effective strategies introduced to develop basic skills are now beginning to show an impact through improved standards.

The use of assessment in the school is very good and contributes strongly to students' learning. Teachers have a very clear idea of the progress students are making. They set clear targets and intervene quickly when underachievement is apparent.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum in the main school is good and outstanding in the sixth form. The major strength is that the curriculum is tailored to students' needs and, if necessary, courses offered to students are adjusted rapidly to ensure student motivation and a high take-up. A wide range of GCSE and vocational courses are available which provide good student motivation and lead to very good further training and employment opportunities. In the sixth form, students greatly benefit from the consortium arrangements provided by the Confederation and the Tamar Valley Consortium which enables them to take a very wide range of academic and vocational courses.

The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities the school offers is very wide and meets most students' needs and interests through clubs, school visits and curriculum days. The needs of gifted and talented students are well met; for example, the opportunity for Year 11 students to take a special engineering qualification. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and with English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress.

The identification of students in Years 7 and 8 who need additional support for basic skills in literacy and numeracy is good and support has improved, particularly since last September. However, the teaching of both literacy and numeracy, despite the good start, is not developed well enough across all subjects, especially as the school is designated as a mathematics and computing school. Teaching, however, has taken good advantage of specialist ICT facilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The school provides exceptionally good care, guidance and support for all its students. The staff are all fully committed to students' welfare, and senior managers have a high level of knowledge and competence to provide appropriate support for the wide range of needs that arise from students' backgrounds, including learning difficulties and disabilities and visual impairment. The support is very well organised and draws on a wide range of agencies external to the school, including organisations such as the educational psychology service and health services, as well as parents and carers. Systems to monitor the progress of students are good, and effective interventions are organised for students at risk of underachievement. Rewards as well as sanctions are used in a well balanced package to ensure that students achieve as well as they can. Policies to ensure the safety of students are secure. Child protection procedures are well understood and put into practice. In the sixth form, inconsistency in the way attendance information is managed reduces the effectiveness of the support given to students. Guidance on subject choices at the end of Year 9 and further education at the end of Year 11 is excellent.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The principal provides outstanding leadership, characterised by a clear vision for the development of the school which unites the staff in a continual drive to improve standards. Key to this is a commitment to a fully inclusive education and involvement of all, including students, in the running of the school. Delegated responsibility is backed up by clear expectations and comprehensive quality assurance systems. The principal is supported by a powerful senior leadership team, combining the effective performance of their roles with their own drive for self-improvement. The processes of self-evaluation and planning are good and the senior managers understand the strengths and weaknesses in the school. The improvements in standards and achievement in the last year are evidence of a good capacity to improve. A key strength of the school is the inclusive ethos which has been created where all students feel valued, and recognise in the role models of their teachers ways in which they can develop their own lives and potential. Middle managers provide good leadership overall. The views of parents and students are considered and have influenced changes, for example in the way parents are informed about the progress of their children. The governors work effectively to fulfil their responsibilities and to provide good support. Specialist school status has had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, particularly raising standards in ICT. Financial planning and the use of resources are good.



**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
--	-----------------------	--------------

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the valuable contribution you made to your school's inspection on 31 January – 1 February. We enjoyed our discussions with you and got much from them.

Your school provides a good education for its students in response to good teaching. Standards are close to average at the end of Year 11 and average in the sixth form. This represents good progress from your starting points. The school's main strengths are:

- Outstanding leadership by the principal, supported by a very competent and committed senior leadership team.
- Excellent care, support and guidance which gives you the confidence to make very impressive contributions to the community.
- A good curriculum in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form, giving you a broad range of courses to choose from and preparing you well for the world of work.

We have asked your school to do two main things to bring about improvement:

- Raise standards and achievement further by developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and evaluating the impact of implementation.
- Improve management systems for recording and monitoring attendance in the sixth form. Some of you also told us that in some lessons and around the school the behaviour of a very small minority of students is not good. Although we did not see any poor behaviour during the two days we spent in your school, I have passed on your concerns for the senior leadership team to deal with. For your part, you can raise achievement further by working with your teachers to set yourselves challenging targets and by putting in that extra bit of effort to ensure you meet them.