

Southbrook College

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 113634 |
| Local Authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 338206 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 October 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Jeffery Plumb |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 104 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Margaret Butt |
| Principal | Hilary Green |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 September 2006 |
| School address | Bishop Westall Road Topsham Road Exeter EX2 6JB |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 18 lessons and held meetings with the chair of the governing body and a parent governor, students, parents, staff focus groups, the college's pastoral support worker and members of the senior leadership team. They observed the college's work, and looked at a wide range of evidence, including data on students' progress, attendance data, exclusion data, students' individual education and behavioural plans, care plans, curriculum documents, risk assessments, safeguarding policies, the college's development plan, two case studies of vulnerable students and 30 parent questionnaires. They spent time looking at the transport arrangements at the end of the day, looked at the college's plans to develop an allotment and carefully examined the college's strategic plan to promote community cohesion.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the college's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of different special education and/or disability groups provided for by the college
- the support for students with challenging behaviours associated with their special educational needs
- the integration of the very few Key Stage 2 pupils in Year 7 classes
- the college's curriculum and linked accreditation opportunities
- the college's strategy and planning to promote community cohesion.

Information about the school

Southbrook College provides education for students with moderate learning difficulties; severe learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; or an autistic spectrum disorder. There are two Year 6 pupils on roll who are integrated in lessons with Year 7 students. All students have a statement of special educational need and the large majority are boys. Almost all students are of White British origin and very few come from families where English is not the home language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free college meals is in line with the national average. Students come from a wide catchment area within the county of Devon. The college provides extended services which include a breakfast club, a youth club, an after-school club, parent workshops and training, and counselling programmes. Outreach work includes partnerships with local primary, secondary and special schools, with expertise offered by an advanced skills teacher, outreach teachers and a special educational needs coordinator, particularly in supporting students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and with autistic spectrum disorder. The college was granted specialist status for cognition and learning in September 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Southbrook College provides an outstanding quality of education. Barriers to learning for students, which are related to their special educational needs and/or disabilities, are successfully removed, with the result that the vast majority of students make outstanding progress and exceed their challenging annual achievement targets. The college uses its specialist status for cognition and learning to provide outreach support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend mainstream schools and for their families. It provides very high-quality support, particularly for teachers in those schools who work with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and complex behavioural needs.

Teaching sparkles and successfully fires up the students to learn. An innovative, relevant and personalised curriculum enables students to leave equipped with the skills required to access further education courses, which opens up doors to meaningful employment for them. The vast majority of students with complex speech and language difficulties and behaviours linked to their frustration in not being able to communicate effectively are incredibly well supported within this college. They progress in their learning, as a parent governor said, 'with leaps and bounds'. As students gain confidence, they take off with their learning. By the end of Key Stage 4, the vast majority of students attain creditable GCSE passes and valuable vocational qualifications. Measured against their starting points, this represents outstanding achievement. Rigour and enthusiasm on the part of a dedicated staff team, and a commitment to helping every student reach her or his full academic and personal potential, lie at the heart of this very successful college.

The principal and her dedicated staff team work ceaselessly to ensure that every student becomes a rounded and responsible citizen who enters adult life with the skills required to hold down a job and to be included with dignity and respect in society. This vision is realised for the vast majority of students. Analysis of the college's performance in every area of its work is thorough, detailed and evidence-based. Decisive actions, such as modifications to the system for tracking students' progress and to the curriculum, result in raising achievement. However, the implementation of the strategy to raise students' awareness of community cohesion is at an early stage of development and not yet fully bedded down within the college. Based on the very significant improvements since the last inspection and the impact of recent decisive actions to improve students' achievement ' such as the special educational needs coordinator's work with students struggling with their speech and language, and curriculum programmes targeted at re-engaging disaffected students ' the capacity for sustained improvement and the value for money provided by the college are outstanding.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the college strategy for community cohesion by ensuring that there is detailed and effective mapping of the rich variety of activities which promote community cohesion and fully incorporate them into the college's planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All students make at least good progress with their learning in lessons, and their achievement over time is outstanding. Most students enter the college with standards well below the national average, reflecting their special educational needs and associated complex behaviours which are an obstacle to their learning, but there are a few students with autistic spectrum disorder whose levels of attainment are close to the national average. All students are rigorously challenged in their learning and exceptionally well supported in overcoming behavioural difficulties associated with their special educational needs. Consequently, achievement in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology is outstanding. Entry Level qualifications and GCSE passes in a wide range of subjects, measured against students' starting points, are very good. In art, students excel in GCSE and a few reach standards above the national average. Students also successfully achieve nationally recognised accreditation in a wide range of vocational subjects. By the time they move on to further education colleges, they are very well equipped for their next steps in learning. The few Year 6 pupils make outstanding progress, as do the students in public care.

Outstanding enterprise projects, coupled with extremely relevant work experience placements, enable students to acquire successfully the important literacy, mathematical and life skills required for them to take their place as confident young people in the adult world. Overwhelmingly, students enjoy coming to the college and this contributes to their good attendance. Their behaviour is good. Their involvement in decision making is outstanding and they make a very positive contribution to both the college and the wider community. The vociferous college council has, through its voice and actions, significantly improved the playground areas. Students have an excellent understanding of the need to take regular exercise and the importance of choosing to eat healthy foods. They understand that smoking and drinking too much alcohol lead to poor health. Students told inspectors that they feel safe at college and know who to go to with any problems they may have. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are considerate of each other's views and beliefs and have an incredibly well-tuned sense of what is right and what is wrong.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | * |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 1 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 1 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 |

How effective is the provision?

The overwhelming majority of lessons are exceptionally well planned to meet the needs of pupils and so accelerate their learning and development. Expert subject knowledge, coupled with sensory activities, engage students' interest and raise their achievement. Teaching assistants are very effective at supporting students' learning in lessons. Teaching in art is consistently outstanding and contributes to the excellent learning and high achievement of students in this subject. In almost all lessons assessment of what students know and can do is used to challenge students and so move them on rapidly in their learning. In an outstanding Year 9 English lesson, brisk teaching, excellent relationships, very effective questioning and excellent visual cues resulted in all students exceeding their speech and language targets while gaining a very good knowledge and understanding of Macbeth. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson, peer mentoring by high-achieving students, while working collaboratively in a group, enabled other students to make rapid gains in their partitioning skills. Occasionally teachers talk for too long at the start of the lesson and do not pay sufficient attention in their planned activities to the small next steps of learning required by each student in the class. On these rare occasions students' learning is slowed.

The flexibly planned, tailor-made curriculum programmes meet students' needs exceptionally well. Key Stage 4 pupils are successfully engaged with learning and gain relevant vocational qualifications which equip them with the skills required for further education and employment. Specific programmes to engage disaffected students, such as a health and beauty course targeted at a group of girls who had lost interest in learning, are outstanding. They lead to improved attendance, increased motivation in

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learning and valuable external accreditation. A fully inclusive physical education programme makes a very valuable contribution to students' fitness. Pathways are provided for them, through the extended curriculum programme, to continue with their sporting and musical interests when they leave college. Therapy is fully integral into the curriculum. For example, excellent programmes designed by the speech therapist are used very effectively by the special educational needs coordinator to help students gain confidence and increased fluency in speaking. Multi-sensory and visual curricula in both English and mathematics contribute very significantly to raising students' achievement. Very effective collaborative working between the college and a wide range of external agencies ensures that students' care needs are exceptionally well met. As required, students have intimate care plans and detailed personalised behaviour plans. These plans ensure that all students are treated with dignity and become increasingly independent in their learning, especially as they begin to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour. Transition arrangements are outstanding. External careers guidance and support ensure that all students are appropriately placed for the next step in their education when they leave the college. Work with families is innovative and provides parents and carers with practical and most helpful advice in supporting the learning of their children. Induction procedures for new students are outstanding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 1 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 1 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The principal and her dedicated staff team share a clear vision which focuses on removing obstacles to learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and promoting successful learning for them. Evidence shows that this vision is realised, as students are included fully with their mainstream peers in an exciting range of off-site college courses and a wide range of sporting and musical activities in the community. There is a ceaseless drive to improve the quality of provision and inclusion opportunities for the students. Equality of opportunity for all students is a core value of this college. Rigour lies at the heart of this learning community where the staff team have created a 'can do' culture for all students and where expectations are high. Middle managers are highly skilled and accelerate learning for students in their specialist subject areas. Very effective systems and procedures are in place to ensure that students are secure and safe. At the time of the inspection, child protection procedures

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met government regulations. Risk assessments, including of students' medical and behavioural needs, are detailed and thorough.

The college has very effective partnerships with local businesses and an extensive range of external support agencies which support students' learning and personal development exceptionally well. The college's pastoral worker is an effective link with parents and carers and provides families with good support.

Provision for community cohesion is well planned. A thorough audit has been completed and an action plan drawn up, but elements of it are yet to be ratified by the whole governing body. The students successfully engage in a wide range of community cohesion activities at college, local, national and global levels. Links between the activities and the impact they have on students' learning are good, but they are insufficiently mapped and embedded in the college's planning systems. Governance is outstanding. Systems for self-evaluation are very effectively monitored and decisive actions are taken to drive improvement. The governing body is highly skilled and provides an extremely effective balance of challenge and support to the college.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

Returns of the Ofsted questionnaire indicate that most parents are pleased with what the college achieves for their children. Their views are exemplified by the comment, 'A highly motivated, talented and caring staff who are doing an excellent job.' However, a few parents expressed a concern about the way in which the college manages students with challenging behaviour. During the inspection, the inspection team found that

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behaviour was good but recognised that in recent years the college has admitted an increased number of students with autistic spectrum disorder who, at times, present with very complex behaviours. The college works closely with parents and carers and ceaselessly strives to improve this aspect of its work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southbrook College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 30 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 104 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 17 | 57 | 12 | 40 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 16 | 53 | 12 | 40 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 14 | 47 | 14 | 47 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 10 | 33 | 18 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 15 | 50 | 13 | 43 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 11 | 37 | 15 | 50 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 15 | 50 | 13 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 13 | 43 | 13 | 43 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 15 | 50 | 11 | 37 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 12 | 40 | 16 | 53 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 12 | 40 | 13 | 43 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 17 | 57 | 10 | 33 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 18 | 60 | 12 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 39 | 58 | 3 | 0 |
| Primary schools | 13 | 50 | 33 | 4 |
| Secondary schools | 17 | 40 | 34 | 9 |
| Sixth forms | 18 | 43 | 37 | 2 |
| Special schools | 26 | 54 | 18 | 2 |
| Pupil referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Southbrook College, Exeter, EX2 6JB

We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your outstanding college. We think that Southbrook is a lovely place to be and we wish to thank those of you who took the time to talk to us about your life at college. You came across as students who are genuinely excited about your work at college.

Here are the main points we found.

- Your college is outstanding and provides you with lots of interesting and exciting things to do, both within the classroom and in the wider community.
- You achieve exceptionally well in English, mathematics and art and are very well prepared to start high-quality courses at further education colleges when you leave school.
- The teaching and care you receive are excellent.
- You thoroughly enjoy coming to college and your behaviour is good.
- Your principal and her committed staff team run your college outstandingly well and ensure that you are kept very safe and that your behavioural and medical needs are exceptionally well met.
- You develop very important work-related and life skills to equip you to take your place as responsible adults in society.
- Your accreditation opportunities, including for acquiring vocational qualifications, are very good.

To help your caring and outstanding college to get even better, I have asked your teachers to make sure that you are given even more opportunities to learn about your own community and the diverse communities in your country and around the world.

Thank you once again for your help during this inspection.

Yours faithfully

Jeffery Plumb

Lead Inspector

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