

Inspection of South Dartmoor Community College

Balland Lane, Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7EW

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The executive headteacher of this school is Jen Veal. This school is part of the Westcountry Schools Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rob Haring, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Iain Grafton.

What is it like to attend this school?

South Dartmoor Community College is ambitious that all pupils are well prepared for their future studies. The school, with the support of the trust, has raised examination outcomes for pupils and sixth-form students. The school understands the importance of continuing to support disadvantaged pupils to achieve as well as their peers.

The school has high expectations for pupils' conduct. There are clear consequences and support if a pupil's behaviour does not meet these. Pupils appreciate this clarity and fairness. Pupils and staff have positive and respectful relationships which mean that pupils feel safe. As a result, the school is calm and pupils can focus on learning.

The school encourages pupils to widen their experiences and develop their interests. For example, school productions bring the school community together to display creative talents. The new 'Reach' programme for pupils in Years 7 to 9 includes a rich selection of activities such as art, mindfulness and animal husbandry. Sport and outdoor activities are particularly popular with pupils of all ages. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Ten Tors provide physical challenges and develop leadership skills. Pupils enjoyed their involvement in designing the new school uniform with leaders.

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

There has been an extensive review of the curriculum to ensure that it remains broad for all pupils. The school has worked with trust leaders to develop the Westcountry Schools Trust curriculum. All year groups are now following this curriculum, which is preparing them well for the next stage of their studies. The school provides opportunities for pupils to study the GCSE qualifications that form the English Baccalaureate. Currently, the number of pupils completing this is low, but leaders are considering how to raise this further.

In most subjects, leaders have set out the important knowledge that pupils will learn. Formal assessments check pupils' recall and provide the feedback they need to improve their work. However, between these formal assessments, there is sometimes insufficient checking of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Without this, teachers do not have the information they need to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, if a gap in a pupil's knowledge is not identified and resolved it can hinder their ability to learn future topics. Equally, pupils who have already grasped concepts may not move to more complex ideas swiftly enough.

Reading is important at this school. Those who need support with reading receive this. This builds their confidence and fluency. The school reading curriculum includes a wide range of books to promote an enjoyment of reading. Each text has been deliberately chosen to interest pupils or develop their understanding of the modern world. Dedicated vocabulary work each Friday helps pupils in Years 7 to 9 widen their own vocabulary in their written work.

Adults in school quickly identify the individual needs of pupils. These are clearly communicated with all staff so that they can make the adaptations for pupils. The

pecially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (specially resourced provision), 'The CAIRB', provides a bespoke package of support for some pupils. Pupils learn the curriculum and engage in the life of the school alongside their peers.

Attendance is a school and trust priority. The school and sixth form actively promote the importance of regular attendance. It seeks to work with pupils and their families to provide the individual support needed for pupils to attend school. As a result, the school is beginning to see improvements in attendance and a reduction in persistent absence.

The school's personal development curriculum prepares pupils and students in the sixth form for adult life. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to look after their mental and physical health. Pupils experience the world of work through assemblies and careers fairs. Impartial careers advice guides pupils' next steps. Leaders regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it addresses topics relevant to the lives of their pupils. For example, the school's recent work to highlight the unacceptable nature of misogynistic language. Pupils are proud that their school is inclusive and know that bullying is not tolerated.

Leaders have taken great care to consider the workload and well-being of staff when implementing changes and improvements. They have invested in ongoing professional development for staff so that they have the skills they need to deliver the new curriculum. The school warmly welcomes teachers early in their career into the profession. Those responsible for governance at the school and trust are continuing to develop systems to check that all areas of school life are working as well as they intend.

Staff share leaders' vision to provide a high-quality education to all pupils. Parents have great confidence in the school and overwhelmingly recommend it to others. They recognise the improvements and appreciate how the community is encouraged to be involved in school life.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' use of assessment is occasionally not precise enough. In some cases, learning is moved on before pupils have grasped the foundational knowledge that they need. In other cases, pupils are not introduced to new content quickly enough. The trust should ensure that assessment supports teachers to accurately evaluate pupils' current understanding of the curriculum to inform their future planning.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136569
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10322244
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	812
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	116
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
CEO of the trust	Rob Haring
Headteacher	Jen Veal (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Westcountry Schools Trust.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses two registered and three unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school has a specially resource provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs. Currently, there are 12 places within this provision.

Information about this inspection

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

2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff, support staff, trust executive leaders, the chair of the hub advisory board and the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, art, history and religious studies. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and considered the support provided to meet the needs of these pupils. They visited the specially resourced provision.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documentation, including the minutes of the governance meetings, the school’s self-evaluation documents and improvement plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the view of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey. Inspectors also met with groups of pupils, including representatives from the school council and sixth-form students.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Richard Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Forster	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Foley	Ofsted Inspector

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