

Exmouth Community College

Gipsy Lane, Exmouth, Devon EX8 3AF

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make rapid enough progress through the school, and so standards at GCSE level are not high enough.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils made was well below other pupils nationally in 2016 and 2017. As a result, many of these pupils did not attain the standard of which they were capable in both GCSE English and mathematics.
- Pupils' literacy skills are not being developed effectively.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good across the school. The level of challenge that pupils experience is too variable between and within subjects.
- Teachers' assessment of pupils' work does not identify underperformance quickly enough. Some pupils struggle for too long without receiving help.
- Teachers' expectations of the least able pupils are not high enough, and so these pupils underachieve in many subject areas.
- Teaching is not developing pupils' self-reliance sufficiently. Consequently, some pupils have little confidence in their own ability.
- Senior leaders have not ensured that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively.
- Middle leaders' expectations of the quality of teaching in their departments have been too low. The new principal is increasing middle leaders' aspirations, but weaknesses remain in some areas.
- In the past, governors have not held senior leaders to account closely enough for the performance of the school. However, they are now demonstrating greater ambition.

The school has the following strengths

- The new principal started in September 2017. He is raising teachers' expectations and challenging complacency wherever he finds it.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics, art and religious education.
- Teachers are motivated and eager to improve. They are receptive to training and new ideas.
- Sixth-form students are well taught, and so make strong academic progress.
- Pupils behave well. The great majority have good relationships with their teachers and with each other.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievements by:
 - making sure that teachers have high expectations of what pupils, particularly the least able pupils, are capable of achieving
 - ensuring that the quality of teaching across the school matches the teaching seen in the best departments
 - setting work that is appropriately challenging for pupils with different abilities
 - improving assessment processes to make sure that misconceptions are identified quickly and pupils are given extra help to overcome their difficulties
 - ensuring that initiatives to help pupils develop their literacy and numeracy skills are consistently applied.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by developing their self-confidence and resilience.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that middle leaders have consistently high expectations of the quality of teaching in their departments
 - providing training to help middle leaders accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of their departments
 - ensuring that pupil premium funding is targeted towards those who need the most support
 - providing training to develop governors' skills further and giving them opportunities to see good practice in other settings.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not been effective in raising the quality of teaching at the school and ensuring high expectations. Consequently, in recent years, pupils have not made the progress they are capable of. Disadvantaged pupils in particular have not made enough progress because senior leaders have not ensured that extra funding for this group has been used effectively.
- The new principal has rapidly established a shared understanding among staff of what needs to be done to bring about improvement. He has a clear vision for the future of the school, which is shared by senior leaders. Development plans are now clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, it is too early to see the result of the action that is now being taken.
- Middle leaders' assessment of the quality of teaching in the subjects they are responsible for has been over-generous. They are not yet sharp enough in using assessment information to identify underperformance. Therefore, they have not challenged less effective teaching urgently enough, and so inconsistent practice persists. For example, pupils' literacy skills are not developed consistently in different subject areas.
- The principal models good relationships and is developing a climate of trust. As a result, staff are increasingly well motivated. They are willing to share ideas and take part in professional development activities to improve their skills. They particularly welcome the opportunity to look at good practice in other schools. The great majority of staff who responded to the online survey said that they enjoy working at this school and feel well supported by senior leaders.
- Senior leaders have ensured that a rigorous system for managing the performance of staff is now in place. Training opportunities are aligned well with teachers' performance targets and the priorities of the school. Newly qualified teachers are supported well through an effective induction and support programme.
- The curriculum includes a broad range of courses at key stage 4, including both academic and vocational options. Staff give pupils clear guidance about suitable courses, and so pupils and their parents make informed choices. Senior leaders are reviewing the curriculum in key stages 3 and 4 to ensure that it meets pupils' needs more closely.
- Senior leaders make sure that pupils understand the fundamental British values of tolerance, religious freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils demonstrate this understanding through thoughtful discussions in personal development lessons. However, some pupils have failed to develop securely in self-confidence and in wider personal skills. As a result, a minority of pupils are less resilient than their peers and not as well equipped to take their place in society when they leave.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a wide range of clubs and activities beyond their lessons. Pupils appreciate these extra-curricular activities; one pupil commented, 'There is a lot on offer here, in a variety of areas.' Pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well through lessons, assemblies and other activities. For example, when studying 'To Kill a Mockingbird', English teachers skilfully develop

pupils' empathy for people from different backgrounds.

- Leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is improving quickly. Over the last year, a new coordinator has started to reorganise the support provided for this group. Funding for these pupils is being used effectively.
- Funding provided to support Year 7 pupils who need to catch up with literacy and numeracy skills is being used to support an innovative 'discovery' curriculum, which is helping these pupils to make better progress. Senior leaders keep the use of this funding under close scrutiny.

Governance of the school

- The governing board is a large, well-motivated group with a wide set of skills and clearly defined roles. They are passionate about providing a good education for pupils in Exmouth. However, they recognise that, in recent years, pupils' progress has not been good enough. The new chair of the governing board was appointed in September 2017. She demonstrates the necessary strategic awareness and urgency to secure rapid improvement at the school.
- Governors are now working closely with senior leaders to monitor the school's performance. They use training wisely to enhance their understanding of information relating to the progress of different groups of pupils. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The chair of the governing board ensures that all responsibilities relating to safeguarding and financial transparency are fulfilled. Governors monitor the impact of extra funding for disadvantaged pupils, for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for Year 7 pupils who need to catch up. They are aware of the lack of impact in some areas in the past, and they are determined to address these shortcomings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders give safeguarding a high priority and ensure that policy and practice are in line with statutory requirements. Governors, senior leaders and staff are all suitably trained, and so they understand clearly what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety.
- Senior leaders communicate well with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. They keep detailed records of any concerns that are raised and any action that is subsequently taken. Senior leaders follow up referrals to other agencies if the response they receive is not appropriately urgent.
- Senior leaders successfully promote positive messages about safeguarding with parents and pupils. A large majority of parents believe that pupils are well looked after and are safe at school. Senior leaders give staff regular updates that keep them aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and support the culture of vigilance throughout the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching varies considerably from department to department. Although there are areas of good practice, some teaching does not cause pupils to make strong progress. For example, the quality of work produced by the same pupil in different subject areas can vary considerably because of variation in the level of challenge that teachers provide for them.
- Teachers are not adept at identifying when pupils have misunderstood an idea or concept. As a result, they are slow to adjust their teaching to address pupils' misconceptions. Some pupils are reluctant to ask for help, and so gaps in their knowledge persist.
- Teaching does not challenge the least able pupils sufficiently. These pupils have not made good progress in recent years because teachers' expectations of what they are capable of achieving have been too low. Where teachers expect the least able pupils to learn quickly, for example, in mathematics, these pupils are successful. However, there are too many other subjects in which this does not happen.
- Many pupils are not aware of the academic targets that teachers have set for them or do not understand the assessments that those targets are based on. Consequently, they do not have a clear idea of what is expected.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is good. The vast majority of classes are taught by specialists with a deep understanding of their subject. Particularly in the sixth form, teachers are able to illustrate ideas by drawing on their rich background knowledge. Teachers use homework effectively to reinforce learning in the classroom.
- Teachers are well motivated. They have welcomed the new principal's recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching. They are keen to share ideas and consider how they can accelerate pupils' progress.
- Teachers have positive relationships with their classes and have high expectations of behaviour. Most pupils respect their teachers, and so interruptions to learning are rare. Teaching assistants also have good relationships with pupils. Pupils are appreciative of the help they receive.
- A large majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children are well taught.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some pupils lack resilience when they are asked to deal with an unforeseen situation or problem. They can give up too easily or waste time using unrealistic strategies. The school recognises this and is planning to review the tutorial system, and so develop pupils' understanding of how to learn successfully.
- During discussions, some pupils do not have the confidence to communicate clearly with adults. This hinders their progress because it limits their ability to frame an argument and test ideas.

- The majority of pupils believe that teachers deal with incidents of bullying well when they happen. However, some pupils feel that not all staff respond quickly enough when incidents are reported.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They understand the risks they face in many different situations because they receive good advice from staff. For example, pupils understand the risks associated with using social media and the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Pupils are given clear messages about how to maintain good physical and mental health. Pupils have a good understanding of these issues, and so are able to make sensible choices to stay healthy.
- The school provides sound, impartial careers education and guidance through a variety of well-planned activities. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of the different routes available to them in the next stage of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well, and so the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school is calm and orderly, even when large numbers of pupils are moving around both sites and across the bridge in between. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and provide good supervision at break, lunchtime and after school.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Pupils told inspectors that there is little disruption in lessons and this was confirmed by the observations that inspectors made.
- The majority of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey believe the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved and these parents would recommend the school to others.
- Attendance is average for most groups of pupils. A small group of pupils, mainly disadvantaged, find it difficult to attend school regularly. The rate of persistent absence is currently below average.
- Senior leaders have been successful in using the 'Reach centre' at the school to help those pupils who find it difficult to maintain good conduct and self-discipline. Exclusions for unacceptable behaviour are below average as a result.
- Pupils' behaviour when they attend college courses is good. Senior leaders communicate well with college tutors and monitor pupils' behaviour carefully.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because, although most pupils start in Year 7 with average attainment, in many subjects they do not attain the GCSE grades they are capable of.
- Pupils' progress in GCSE English was below average in 2017. Pupils' progress in GCSE mathematics was considerably stronger than in English in 2017. Pupils have made consistently strong progress in mathematics in recent years and the same is true of current pupils.

- Unvalidated assessment information indicates that pupils' progress, measured across eight GCSE subjects, was below average in 2017. Pupils currently in the school continue to have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. In science, for example, many pupils struggle to explain the key ideas they are learning about.
- In recent years, disadvantaged pupils' progress has been consistently well below that of other pupils nationally. Senior leaders' efforts to help these pupils to improve were not successful last year. Consequently, many disadvantaged pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 without the basic qualifications of GCSE English and mathematics.
- Recent improvements in English teaching are ensuring that pupils currently in the school are making better progress in this subject. However, until very recently, teachers have put insufficient emphasis on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar in other subjects. Many pupils' literacy skills are still weak as a result.
- The most able pupils' progress, including that of the most able disadvantaged pupils, was below average in 2017. In some subjects, for example modern languages, the most able pupils are challenged well. However, this is not consistently true in other subjects. The least able pupils' progress in a range of GCSE subjects was well below average in 2017 because teachers' expectations of these pupils' capabilities were too low.
- In key stage 3, pupils are making good progress in art, history and music. Pupils develop their drawing skills quickly in art. For example, Year 7 pupils demonstrate an ability to represent 3D-shapes by sophisticated use of shading.
- Pupils who join the school in Year 7 with low levels of attainment are supported well by a specialised programme called the 'discovery curriculum'. These pupils make good progress.
- In the past, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have not received effective help and so have not made strong progress. The support for these pupils is improving, and so pupils currently in the school are making better progress.
- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend vocational courses at Exeter College and Bicton College. These pupils are monitored closely by the school and make good progress in their courses.
- Pupils are given good advice about the range of career opportunities open to them when they leave school. This helps them to be well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Sixth-form students make strong progress on their courses because they are motivated to succeed and are well taught. Students' progress on A-level programmes is above the national average. The progress of the small number of students who take vocational programmes is in line with the national average. Students' attainment is rising. For example, the proportion of students that attained A-level grades AAB, with two in facilitating subjects, was significantly higher in 2017 than in the previous year.
- The leaders of the sixth form demonstrate a genuine passion for the success of all students, no matter what their starting points. Disadvantaged students' progress is

improving on 16 to 19 study programmes as a result of the support they receive.

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is more consistent and effective than in the main school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and well-developed strategies for helping students to make progress. As a result, students are challenged to think deeply about their learning in many subjects. However, teaching is not as effective in history, drama and law.
- Last year, those students who had to retake GCSE English made rapid progress. A high proportion of these students attained a standard pass in GCSE English by the end of Year 12. Those students who had to retake GCSE mathematics in Year 12 made less progress, but were still in line with the national average.
- Senior leaders keep the curriculum under review to ensure that it meets students' needs and aspirations. In the past, the sixth form has been seen as separate from the main school. However, this is changing, as more links are being made with the curriculum in key stage 4. The sixth form is no longer seen as an island.
- Students are offered work experience and other work-related activities in Year 12. These experiences help students to develop their employability skills well. Students receive timely advice about the possibilities open to them when they leave. The majority of students take up university places, and a significant proportion go into apprenticeships. However, the school does not know where many students go on to when they leave. Leaders recognise the need to address this issue.
- The school meets the requirements of the 16 to 19 study programmes. Many students complete one-year courses and so leave the sixth form at the end of Year 12. The great majority of students who start two-year programmes see them through to completion at the end of Year 13.
- Students develop their confidence and personal skills well through a wide range of additional enrichment opportunities such as first-aider training. Many students are involved in mentoring younger pupils in the main school, for example through the 'reading revolutionaries' programme. Attendance in the sixth form is lower than in the main school. It is improving, but remains below average.
- After a programme of events and external speakers, students understand how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including online. Students have a good understanding of mental health, because sixth-form leaders emphasise this issue.
- Students' attitudes to their learning are generally good. The majority use their independent study time wisely. A range of good facilities for study is available in the sixth-form centre, including a supervised quiet room. However, leaders do not evaluate the use of this time effectively because they do not keep close enough checks on its use.

School details

Unique reference number	136612
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10037899

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2273
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	380
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Margaret Turgoose
Principal	Andrew Davis
Telephone number	01395 264761
Website	www.exmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@exmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school is operated by the Exmouth Community College Academy Trust. A new chair of the governing board was appointed in September 2017. A new principal was appointed in September 2017.
- This school is much larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is below

average.

- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend vocational courses at Exeter College or Bicton College.
- The school has an on-site facility called the 'Reach centre', which helps any pupils who need to overcome emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 4.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across a wide range of subjects and age groups, including the sixth form. Some observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons and looked at their work. They also scrutinised a wide range of pupils' and students' written work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including minutes of governors' meetings, analysis of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour logs, safeguarding documents, development plans and the school's evaluation of its own performance.
- Meetings were held with the principal, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and students on 16 to 19 study programmes. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally at breaktime and lunchtime. A meeting was held with the chair of the governing board and five other governors.
- Inspectors took account of 246 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, 224 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 105 responses to the staff questionnaire. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with one parent.

Inspection team

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Anita Hemsî	Ofsted Inspector
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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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