

# Dartmouth Academy

Milton Lane, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9HW

## Inspection dates

12–13 September 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Under the principal's exceptionally strong leadership, the quality of education provided by the school has been transformed since 2015, when the school was placed in special measures. As a result, pupils are making much faster progress and achieving well.
- Senior leaders in the school provide very effective support to the principal and to other staff. An ethos of working together to ensure the best outcomes for pupils permeates the school.
- Middle leaders are an emerging strength of the school. Senior leaders support them well and the impact of their work on improving pupils' education is clear and growing. Nonetheless, the effectiveness with which middle leaders monitor, evaluate and develop the teams they lead could improve further.
- The interim advisory council (IAC) is providing exemplary levels of support and challenge to school leaders. Through its rigorous monitoring, the IAC has played a crucial role in driving forward school improvement.
- Support from the multi-academy trust, Education South West, has been very important in raising the standard of education in the school. The school makes very good use of the mentoring and training that the trust provides.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. School leaders make good use of accurate and robust assessment systems to provide a bedrock for school improvement planning.
- Teaching is good. The impact of the improvements in the quality of teaching over the last two years is seen clearly in pupils' work.
- Sometimes, however, teaching does not provide a level of challenge that is high enough, especially for the most able. Work is not pitched sharply enough at the right level for some pupils and some are not clear about how to improve their work.
- Pupils' outcomes across the school are improving. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 increased markedly in 2017 and, in many areas, is now above the national average.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are promoted very well. Pupils are proud to go to Dartmouth Academy and their attitudes to learning have improved dramatically since 2015. Attendance, however, is still too low in the secondary phase.
- The quality of education provided to children in the early years continues to be a strength of the school.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
  - teaching consistently provides pupils, especially the most able, with a higher degree of challenge, so that they achieve a greater depth in their knowledge and understanding
  - work is precisely matched to the needs, aptitudes and abilities of pupils
  - pupils know how to improve their work.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that the work of middle leaders is further developed, including their ability to monitor and evaluate the work of the teams they lead.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that rates of attendance rise, especially in the secondary phase of the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The principal provides exceptionally strong leadership to the school. Driven by a strong moral purpose, she is unremitting in her belief that all pupils can succeed and deserve the best, whatever their background or prior attainment. This belief is at the heart of the rapid improvements the school has made and her mantra that pupils should always aspire to be their 'best selves' is lived out on a daily basis by all pupils and staff. As a result of her strong leadership, the school is unrecognisable from the one that went into special measures in October 2015.
- The principal receives very good support from the senior leadership team. They work together constructively as a team, with the single shared goal of improving pupils' life chances. As a result, the quality of teaching is now having a much greater impact on pupils' academic outcomes and personal development. It is no wonder that pupils say that they now 'love' coming to school and are proud to wear the uniform of Dartmouth Academy.
- As noted at an earlier monitoring visit, middle leaders are an emerging strength of the school. Many are relatively new in post but are bringing energy and dynamism to their new roles. As a result, many of their recent initiatives are beginning to bear fruit already. Middle leaders also relish the opportunities that the school gives them to participate in the extended leadership group, which enables them to develop further their professional expertise. Nevertheless, school leaders recognise that further work is required to develop fully middle leaders' ability to monitor and evaluate the teams they lead.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well led and recent changes have increased the capacity of the school to identify and address pupils' needs. The trust has created a post for a full-time special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), who will work across Dartmouth Academy and a neighbouring secondary school in the trust. The SENCo has an excellent understanding of the role and is already having a positive impact. For example, the quality of pupils' individual education plans has improved. They now give teachers more readily accessible information that is of practical use in helping pupils to learn. Overall, the additional funding for special needs is being well spent.
- The school's curriculum is well designed to allow pupils a breadth of opportunities to succeed. For example, in the past, the school's curriculum structure had made it almost impossible for pupils in key stage 4 to study all the subjects required to achieve the EBacc and consequently very few did. Changes to the design of the curriculum and higher aspirations are ensuring that growing numbers are in a position to achieve the EBacc.
- Leaders have ensured that extra-curricular activities have expanded considerably in the last two years. Particularly popular with pupils, for example, is the learning café, which enables pupils to undertake a wide variety of enriching activities, as well as receive additional support for their studies. A greater number of trips now take place. Recent trips to London, Paris and Borneo have expanded pupils' cultural horizons. This is particularly the case for those pupils who have very limited or no experience of the

world beyond the local area.

- These extra-curricular activities make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is further supported by the formal curriculum, particularly the personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Fundamental British values are also actively promoted. For example, the school council and mock elections and referendums develop pupils' understanding of democracy, individual rights and the rule of the law.
- The school makes good use of all the additional funding it receives. The pupil premium is well targeted at those pupils eligible for it and their academic outcomes are improving at the same rate as pupils generally. Teachers are fully aware of which pupils are disadvantaged and planning takes account of this group of pupils. The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is being used well to help those pupils who did not reach the required standard in Year 6. The sports premium is used well in the primary phase to promote extra-curricular sport, improve teachers' skills in teaching physical education and to promote healthy living.

### **Governance of the school**

- The IAC is providing a level of support to the school's leadership that is a model of its kind. The chairman and other members of the IAC have a clear understanding of the way successful governance works and bring important professional experience in areas such as education and safeguarding to their roles. The rigour with which members of the IAC monitor the school's work is illustrated well by their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the school's improvement plan. In addition, the IAC's prioritisation of improving the quality of the assessment information in the school has been a crucial foundation upon which the school's current success has been built.
- The support provided by the multi-academy trust, Education South West, has been equally crucial to the school's improvement. The trust board, the chief executive and the executive principal have shown an unwavering commitment to ensuring that the school improves rapidly. They have supplied a wealth of training, mentoring and coaching opportunities, of which the school has made very good use. It is clear that, without the creation by the trust of the IAC and the ongoing support it gives to the school, the improvements would have been nowhere near as quick.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This is yet another area where the school's work has been transformed and there is now a true culture of safeguarding in place. Further improvements are being driven forward by the recently appointed assistant principal who acts as the designated safeguarding lead. He has a very good understanding of the requirements of the role. He ensures, through weekly discussions with staff, that they all stay fully up to date on safeguarding and related areas, such as the government's 'Prevent' duty. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. As a result of the school's work, pupils say they feel safe and, moreover, they are safe.
- The school's record of the pre-employment checks on teachers and other staff is well

maintained in order to ensure that all employees are suitable to work with children.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly since 2015. The increasing impact of teaching over time is clearly evident in pupils' improving academic outcomes and personal development. Pupils' work across all phases of the school demonstrates this impact. They are making faster progress and taking greater pride in their work. This is particularly clear, for example, in subjects such as English, history, French and art in the secondary phase or in literacy and phonics teaching in the primary phase.
- The quality of assessment in the school is strong. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils is good and they have risen well to the challenge of improving the robustness of their assessment information, in line with the high expectations set by the senior leadership and the IAC. As a result, the quality of assessment information upon which strategic planning is based is vastly improved.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their teaching well. They use questioning effectively to assess, probe and develop pupils' understanding. This helps pupils to make better progress, although sometimes pupils are not clear how to improve their work.
- Reading is well taught in all phases of the school, from the early years to key stage 4. There is a systematic programme of synthetic phonics teaching in place and, as a result, pupils quickly develop their phonics skills in the foundation stage and Year 1. Intervention to improve the skills of those who continue to struggle with reading is highly effective. For example, some pupils with reading ages substantially lower than their chronological ages have been helped to make dramatic progress.
- Teachers and support staff have excellent relationships with pupils and this helps to foster productive attitudes in the classroom. Teachers have high expectations of conduct and attitudes to learning; pupils apply themselves well to their studies.
- Teachers receive good training to develop their skills, often via the resources of the multi-academy trust. In-school training is also effective. For example, there is an increasing use of secondary specialists in the primary phase to develop teachers' skills in subjects outside the core subjects of literacy and numeracy. In turn, primary teachers share their expertise in teaching reading, and a programme of secondary phonics teaching is about to be launched to help those older pupils who still struggle with reading.
- Teaching in some subjects is characterised by a high degree of challenge. In English, for example, expectations of the quality of written English are high and pupils study challenging texts in depth, including Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' or 'The Tempest'. In history, pupils quickly develop the skills that allow them to form developed responses to historical questions. In primary mathematics lessons, the impact of targeted training is seen in the strong delivery of the mastery curriculum, particularly in relation to reasoning and problem-solving.
- The level of challenge is not as consistent across the whole school, especially for the most able. The accuracy with which work is pitched to meet pupils' needs and

aptitudes is not equally precise across the curriculum.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning have greatly improved over the two years and are now good. They respond keenly to the idea that they should strive to be their 'best selves' at all times. As a result of the improvements in teaching, pupils typically value their education more highly than they did. The school is working with a small number of families and their children to get the message across that a good education is vital to their children and thereby to improve their attendance.
- The school successfully promotes physical and emotional well-being through, for example, the PSHE curriculum and the use of the primary sports premium. Pupils say there is no bullying. Pupils who have been at the school for some years say the situation has greatly improved since 2015.
- The programme of study for PSHE, the school's successful development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the active promotion of British values ensures that pupils are well prepared to be good citizens and for life in modern Britain.
- Careers guidance and work-related learning are strong. As a result, all pupils go on to meaningful further education, apprenticeships or sixth-form study in other schools. Importantly, the courses and apprenticeships that pupils go on to follow are highly appropriate to the prior attainment of pupils and their aptitudes. All pupils in Year 10 undertake work experience, which adds to their development of work-related skills.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well at the school and disruptive behaviour in lessons is rare. When it does occur, teachers manage it well and without fuss. Behaviour out of lessons, including at break and lunchtime, is very good. Pupils socialise with each other well; they do not require high levels of supervision, which is testament to their maturity. Pupils are typically polite to each other and to adults.
- Pupils' punctuality to lessons remains exemplary, as the report of the monitoring visit in June noted. They are keen to get to lessons and to learn.
- Attendance in the primary phase is in line with the national average but attendance is too low in the secondary phase, especially in key stage 3. The school has recently redoubled its efforts to improve this situation. A series of new initiatives are in place and extra support from an educational welfare officer has been arranged. There are some early signs that this might be having an impact but it is far too early to say whether the full impact will be enough to improve attendance significantly.

## Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils now achieve well across all phases of the school. School leaders' swift and rigorous actions have turned around the picture of poor progress seen at the last inspection.
- In the secondary phase, pupils' work shows that teaching is helping them to make good progress over time. This good progress is reflected in the results of public examinations at the end of key stage 4 in 2017. In the new, more rigorous, reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and mathematics, pupils attained at least in line with all pupils nationally, and sometimes above. In mathematics, for example, a higher proportion of pupils than nationally achieved a strong pass (grade 5).
- In other GCSEs, there was particularly strong attainment in art and design, computing, media studies and product design. This, typically good, attainment is all the more noteworthy given that the 2017 Year 11 cohort's prior attainment was significantly below the national average.
- The work of pupils in Years 7 to 10 in the secondary phase shows that they are also typically making good progress as a result of the effective teaching they receive. Particularly strong work is being produced in English, history and French, where pupils quickly pick up the core knowledge, understanding and skills to build on for future success.
- Pupils are also performing well in the primary phase and results at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 show that pupils' attainment is strong. The proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard rose sharply in reading and mathematics. In both subjects, pupils' attainment is now in line with that of all pupils nationally. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 rose by 10 percentage points. Too few pupils, however, achieved greater depth in their reading and writing, whereas in mathematics the proportion was in line with the national figure. This indicates some variability in outcomes for the most able pupils in key stage 2.
- When they are published, the progress scores for key stage 2 are not likely to match these improvements in attainment. This is chiefly because this relatively small cohort has a number of pupils whose progress scores will be very negative. These negative outliers are having a disproportionate effect on the overall average performance score. In addition, poor assessment practice in the school in the past means that the baseline data from which progress is measured is not robust.
- The work of pupils currently in key stages 1 and 2 shows a pattern of broadly good progress, although the current pupils in Year 3 did not attain in line with national averages at the end of key stage 1.
- The security of phonics teaching is reflected in the outcomes of the phonics screening check over time, which have been close to or above the national average for some years.
- As attainment and progress have improved for all pupils, so they have for disadvantaged pupils, although there is still work to be done to diminish the difference in their performance compared to that of other pupils nationally. Similarly, as provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities improves, this is

helping them to make better progress. The performance of the most able pupils is variable. Where teaching challenges them they do well, but, where it does not, their progress can slow down.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The education provided for children in the early years continues to be good. Even when the school overall was being placed in special measures, the early years was judged to be good in 2015. This good standard of education has been built upon by the early years leadership. As a result, children get off to a good start to their education and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is strong and this is recognised by leaders of the multi-academy trust. The trust draws on the school's early years expertise in moderating assessment to provide training for other early years settings in the trust.
- Teaching in both Nursery and Reception is well planned and based on accurate assessment of children's strengths, interests and areas in which they might need further support. Target-setting is good and children understand and talk about what they need to do to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Teachers and other staff make good use of the environment to provide children with stimulating and engaging activities. Children show curiosity and interest and the organisation of sessions allows them to act on these. Children work and play cooperatively together.
- The strengths of phonics teaching across the school are in particular evidence in the early years. Children quickly develop their synthetic phonics skills.
- Children's behaviour in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. Routines are well established and teachers' expectations are high. When children occasionally do become a bit restless, it is usually a result of insufficient challenge in the activity they are doing.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of their Reception year is in line with national figures, as it has been consistently for some years. In areas such as reading, writing, numbers and shape, space and measures, children perform very well. In 2017, the proportion of boys achieving a good level of development increased noticeably.
- Nonetheless, relatively few children who enter their Reception year with development typical for their age go on to be assessed as exceeding the level of development at the end of the year.
- The school works well with parents of children in the early years. Strong links with local pre-schools and home visits make transition into the early years smooth. Interactive learning diaries allow good links between home and school. Parents can make comments on assessments, and most do. Overall, parents are engaged well in their children's education as a result of the school's work.
- The school typically has small numbers of disadvantaged children in the early years (usually less than five); therefore, it is not possible to make any meaningful generalisations about their progress.
- The requirements of the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage' are met.

## School details

Unique reference number	136200
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10034845

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Peter Di Giuseppe
Principal	Tina Graham
Telephone number	01803 839700
Website	<a href="http://www.dartmouthacademy.org.uk">www.dartmouthacademy.org.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk">admin@dartmouthacademy.org.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	30 September–1 October 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about contact details, admission arrangements, the accessibility plan for disabled pupils and the school's equality objectives.
- Dartmouth Academy is an all-through school. It is a member of the Education South West multi-academy trust. Governance is carried out by the IAC in line with the trust's scheme of delegation.
- The school is smaller than average in size and the number of pupils on roll is significantly lower than its maximum capacity. Since the previous full inspection, the school has temporarily closed its sixth form.

- The school meets the government's floor standards for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school currently uses no alternative providers.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection started out as a monitoring visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. It subsequently converted to a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors undertook a wide range of activities to gather evidence to support their judgements. They observed pupils learning in lessons and looked at the work in their books. During these visits to lessons, they also talked to pupils about their learning and their experiences in the school. Inspectors also talked more formally to two groups of pupils from the primary and secondary phases. Observations in lessons were often done jointly with members of the senior leadership team or middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with the principal, senior leaders, middle leaders and other staff throughout the two days of inspection. The lead inspector met with members of the IAC, including the chair of governors. He also had discussions with the executive principal and the chief executive officer of Education South West.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-development plan and records of pupils' progress. Documents regarding safeguarding were also closely examined, including the single central record of pre-employment checks made on teachers and other staff.
- There were no electronic surveys of parents or pupils on this inspection, but inspectors did examine the results of the school's own surveys of these two groups.

## Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Nash	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Olford	Ofsted Inspector

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