

Honiton Community College

School Lane, Honiton, Devon EX14 1QT

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| Inspection dates | 16–17 March and 26–27 April 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal and his senior leadership team are determinedly improving the quality of education. As a consequence, current pupils make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders have established a school-wide approach to improving the quality of teaching. This is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Teaching is good overall and is well planned to ensure that pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Subject leaders are held firmly to account for the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in their subjects. Increasingly they are taking a lead role in school improvement.
- Outcomes for key groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, are improving.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The good behaviour and attitudes of pupils contribute to the orderly, purposeful and positive atmosphere in the school. Their respect for themselves, others and the environment supports good learning.
- Governors demonstrate a commitment to their role in improving the quality of education provided. They have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The degree of challenge presented to pupils, whatever their individual starting points, is not consistently high across all subjects.
- Pupils' mathematical and scientific reasoning skills are not fully developed. This is impeding their progress towards mastery of these subjects.
- Outcomes for learners in the sixth form require improvement. Achievement is variable between subjects and courses.
- Development of sixth-form learners' work-related skills needs to be a more central part of their overall study programmes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan lessons across all subjects that include a high degree of challenge for pupils whatever their starting points, including in the sixth form
 - develop further pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics and science so that they can attain greater mastery of these subjects.
- Improve outcomes for learners following 16 to 19 study programmes by ensuring that:
 - leaders undertake a precise analysis of what each learner knows, understands and can do when they start a course and that this is used to inform teaching
 - all learners make progress in developing appropriate work-related skills that link well to the rest of their courses and to their planned next steps after the sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The principal leads the school with integrity and determination to improve the life chances of pupils. He pursues improvement for all pupils with tenacity and resilience. The impact of the school's vision for self-respect, respect for others and respect for the environment is conspicuous in pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour.
- Senior leaders and governors know that, in recent years, outcomes for pupils have not been good enough. They have focused keenly on improving the quality of teaching across the school and, consequently, the progress of current pupils is good and improving.
- Leaders have formed effective partnerships with schools within the Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools' Alliance. These partnerships are helping the school to improve leadership, teaching and learning. In particular, the alliance's external evaluation of the school's performance has sharpened and reinforced school leaders' understanding of what needs to improve.
- Subject leadership is secure as a consequence of effective training and the sharing of good practice. Subject leaders are held to account for the performance of teachers in their teams and the achievement of pupils in their subjects. In turn, they take an increasingly proactive and effective role in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Teaching, learning and assessment are now good in most subjects and improving in history, art and French.
- Senior leaders have established effective systems to manage teachers' performance. The successful focus on training and mutual support has increased staff confidence and motivation. Morale is high. As one member of staff put it, 'It is a great place to work, with a friendly, supportive and professional staff.' Underperformance is addressed rigorously when necessary.
- School leaders and governors make effective use of funding that the school receives to help disadvantaged pupils and those working at a low level when they join the school. Increasingly, this is helping these pupils to catch up in their achievement when compared with others in the school and nationally, especially in English. Some gaps remain, however, and the school is intensifying its work to ensure that equally strong progress is made in all subjects.
- The new leader of the sixth form has a secure understanding of what needs to be improved and has very quickly introduced more effective programmes of study. Learners are now on courses better matched to their needs, and teaching is beginning to improve to be in line with that in the rest of the school. Nonetheless, improved leadership of the sixth form has yet to result in good outcomes and therefore the overall quality of 16 to 19 study programmes requires improvement.
- Across the school, the curriculum is broad and balanced ensuring that the development of pupils is good, both academically and in terms of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. The many after-school clubs and local and international visits and trips are important parts of this provision and are enjoyed and valued by pupils and sixth-form learners. They are also encouraged to volunteer to contribute to their communities. For example, some sixth formers help at the local Memory Cafe for people living with early dementia. School leaders aim to ensure that all pupils can access clubs and visits, and they have allocated funding to subsidise costs or offer alternatives where necessary.
- The school follows a curriculum which has a two-year key stage 3 and a three-year key stage 4 GCSE programme. Pupils receive effective guidance to help them to make option choices in Year 8. As a result, they are motivated to learn and their attitudes to study are mature. Some pupils in Year 9 begin land-based courses at the school's forest school provision before moving on to more specialised courses in Year 10 at Bicton College. The individual needs of these pupils are met well.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is strongly committed to the school and governors understand well their role in improving the quality of education. They provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders to help them improve outcomes for pupils. There is a significant amount of professional expertise on the board. Governors readily undertake training to improve their knowledge and understanding of educational issues.
 - Governors have supported the principal in his drive to tackle underperformance and improve teaching. They have made funds available to train, equip and motivate staff to improve teaching and learning.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that pupils are kept as safe as possible on site and in activities. There are strong support structures to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils. School leaders work well with external agencies, parents and the local authority to safeguard pupils. Case studies of particular pupils show that the school works hard to keep them in education and ensure their future success.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers use their secure subject knowledge and increasingly effective questioning skills to help pupils take the next steps in their learning. Relationships with pupils are very positive and contribute to pupils' progress because they are keen to learn. Most time in lessons is used productively as a consequence of effective planning by teachers. Nonetheless, in some subjects in the sixth form, some teachers do not make sure that learners are maximising their learning in the time available.
- There are now higher expectations of what pupils can and should achieve than in the past. Increasingly, teachers ensure that these expectations are realised through the setting of more challenging work and regular marking and support in line with the school's policy. When the work set for pupils provides an appropriately high level of challenge and encourages them to think deeply about their learning, rates of progress are good. This is not equally successful in all year groups or subjects.
- For pupils who have special educational needs or disability and those joining the school with low levels of achievement, support is particularly effective. Staff have in-depth knowledge of their learning needs. This enables them to plan pupils' work methodically, providing structured support and different materials as needed to improve their learning. Teaching assistants make a positive contribution to this process and are used effectively to support the progress of pupils.
- Teaching is now more successful in focusing on the needs of the most able pupils and this helps them to make better progress than in the past. Teachers encourage them to aim high and give them more challenging work. They are helped to become more confident, self-reliant and adventurous learners. Nonetheless, this good practice has not yet been fully extended to all pupils to ensure that all, whatever their starting points, benefit from this increased challenge. In mathematics and science, for example, pupils need to be challenged to develop their reasoning skills further.
- In subjects such as English and computer science, pupils develop resilience in their study skills and achieve well. In science and mathematics, on the other hand, insufficient emphasis is placed on deepening pupils' reasoning skills and thus progress towards mastery of these subjects is impeded. For example, in mathematics, many pupils are adept at following methods to solve equations but are less secure in their understanding of the reasons why these methods are followed.
- Literacy skills remain a priority. Teachers across the school are focusing on writing because many pupils are notably less confident in this area when joining the school in Year 7. Work to ensure that pupils have good reading skills and to promote a love of reading has had significant impact. The progress made to improve handwriting and presentation skills, however, has not been so rapid.
- Parents receive regular reports about their children's progress and their attitudes to learning. There are also opportunities to discuss progress with teachers at parents' evenings. A large majority of parents who responded Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that they receive sufficient information.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are helped to do the best they can and to keep themselves safe. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils have 'life skills' lessons to prepare them for the opportunities, challenges and risks that face them now and in the future. Sixth-form learners have a tutorial programme which reflects the preparation needed for the next stages in their education, employment and life.
- One key challenge that pupils and sixth-form learners have been encouraged to debate openly is the risk of extremism and radicalisation. This has been addressed sensitively in regard to recent world events and at different levels of maturity, according to age group. This work is accompanied by effective promotion of fundamental British values.

- In addition to helping pupils keep themselves physically healthy, life skills activities also place a considerable emphasis on emotional health and well-being and the development of character. This focus is helping pupils to develop personal qualities such as resilience, perseverance, optimism, integrity and dignity. One parent said: 'This school has been fully supportive and given both my children confidence and strength and nurtured them both into the young adults they are today.'
- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive a range of advice and guidance to prepare them for the world of work. They are given independent and impartial careers information from Year 8 onwards to help them plan their education choices. Nearly all pupils from Years 11 and 13 go on to sustained and suitable courses, training or employment.
- The school provides a strong support structure to ensure that the concerns and needs of vulnerable pupils are addressed. Pupils know whom to go to if they have a problem, including if there are concerns about online safety. School leaders work in partnership with the local authority and other external organisations to restore stability to the lives of pupils who are experiencing difficulties.
- School leaders ensure that those pupils who attend courses at Bicton College are safe, attend well and make good progress. They behave well because they are motivated to learn in this environment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's core values of respect for yourself, others and the environment is reflected in the way pupils behave around the school, their attitudes to learning and their contribution to their community.
- Pupils are smart in their uniforms and show consideration for others as they move around the school. Furthermore, older pupils and sixth-form learners are good role models for younger pupils.
- School records show that disruption to learning is infrequent. Pupils say that when disruption occurs it is dealt with firmly.
- The few occurrences of bullying are dealt with effectively and pupils say that most incidents are resolved quickly. The extremely low number of reports of racial or other discriminatory behaviour reflects the culture of mutual respect. The number of fixed-term exclusions was above average for the last two years but the incidence of repeat exclusions has dropped this year. Improved attitudes to learning are also reflected in the lower frequency of occasions when pupils are removed from class.
- Attendance is broadly average. Where there had been above-average levels of absence for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs, attendance has now improved.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are now making good progress across most year groups and in most subjects. In English, they produce work characterised by fluency of writing and depth of analysis. For example, the work of Year 10 pupils, including that of the most able and the disadvantaged, demonstrates a sophisticated engagement with the key themes of Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'. Similarly, pupils are making good progress in mathematics and science, although some require greater development of their mathematical and scientific reasoning. This becomes clear when some pupils struggle fully to articulate developed answers in mathematics and science.
- Extensive sampling of pupils' work and observations of learning show that progress for pupils currently in the school has improved and continues to improve. In particular, the progress of key groups, including the most able, is improving. Consequently, current learning and progress contrast favourably with previously published information on outcomes.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in the recent past. Senior leaders can demonstrate that their use of the pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. This improvement was confirmed by inspectors' wide-ranging scrutiny of work by such pupils.
- Similarly, outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs or disability are good and improving. This is partly a consequence of more accurate assessments of their abilities which allows fine-tuned and appropriate targets to be set for these pupils across the range of subjects they study. The progress of these pupils is monitored closely and targets revised upwards when necessary to retain an appropriate level of challenge. Again, this contributes to the improvement in outcomes for such pupils.

- The most able pupils are now making good progress – another improvement on recent years. This is especially true in those subjects which provide them with the requisite level of challenge to stimulate their interest and to develop greater depth of understanding. Examples of this were seen in their work over time in geography and English.
- Outcomes in the sixth form for learners on vocational courses are good, with boys now achieving at similar rates to girls, unlike in the past. The majority of learners in the sixth form, however, follow A-level courses and outcomes in these require improvement. There is too much inconsistency between subjects. Moreover, within subjects, the achievement of learners with the same starting points varies markedly. Girls' achievement in academic subjects, when compared with boys' with the same starting points, remains a concern.
- School leaders monitor closely the outcomes for those pupils who attend Bicton College for part of their education. These pupils are making good progress on courses that are well suited to their individual needs. Consequently, they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Pupils' ability to read fluently and with comprehension is amply demonstrated in their work in English where their engagement with works such as 'Twelfth Night' or 'Animal Farm' is based on an ability to read texts precisely. The school has undertaken a successful drive to improve reading skills, but leaders know they have more to do to ensure that pupils write equally confidently from one subject to the next.
- The school works effectively to support pupils who need to catch up with their peers because they join the school with low levels of attainment in English and mathematics. For example, the school continues to build successfully on phonics work done in earlier stages of their education for groups of pupils who struggle to read at levels appropriate to their age.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils at the end of Year 11 move on to appropriate and sustained education, employment or training. This is also the case for those who leave the sixth form after Year 13, although fewer than average go into higher education. Overall, the great majority of pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- In recent years, learners have been allowed to study courses for which they were not best suited or properly prepared. This resulted in significant underperformance, particularly on academic AS- and A-level courses, and in low retention rates. Achievement on vocational courses was stronger overall, but much of this was due to strong performance of girls in a small number of subjects. The achievement of girls on academic courses was particularly low. In the 2015 outcomes, in many subjects, learners with similar starting points achieved a very wide range of different grades.
- Some learners with high GCSE scores do not return to the school sixth form, moving instead to other providers. The sixth-form leader is fully aware that the school needs to build confidence in the quality of its provision to attract more of these learners into the sixth form.
- Under the strong leadership of the new head of sixth form, the progress and achievement of current learners is improving. Retention is also much improved.
- Almost all learners who started courses at the beginning of the current academic year are still on them. They are on study programmes that suit their needs and aspirations and are mostly preparing them well for their planned next steps in further or higher education, training, employment or an apprenticeship. Full and impartial careers guidance before starting post-16 courses helped them make informed decisions about their 16 to 19 study programmes.
- Current learners' work in vocational subjects shows that the previous high standards have been maintained, but that the work of boys is now on a level with that of girls.
- The achievement of current learners in academic subjects in both Years 12 and 13 is good in some subjects, such as geography, but not high enough in others, such as English, psychology or sociology. The results of internal examinations taken by Years 12 and 13 in February indicate a risk of underachievement in some subjects, such as biology and Year 12 mathematics.
- Learners in the subjects where progress is stronger use their independent study time well to prepare for lessons and to complete any follow-up work. In some other subjects, time, including in lessons, is not used as productively as it could be and learners' progress slows as a result.

- A small number of learners study GCSE English and mathematics courses to secure a good grade. Success rates for these learners are high under the supervision of specialist English and mathematics teachers.
- The sixth-form leaders, supported by sixth-form tutors, keep a close eye on the attendance of learners and make frequent checks to see that they are keeping up with their work so that targeted support can be put in place quickly if required. Learners' attendance is generally good, but if it falls effective actions are taken swiftly.
- All current learners have an individual interview early in the year to help identify what additional activities, such as work experience or community work, would help to develop their wider employability skills and better prepare them for the future. Most learners identify activities that align with their studies. However, some learners do not make good progress in developing their wider employability skills. Work-related learning and work experience are not yet integral to the full range of courses. It is much better for those on vocational courses, such as health and social care, than for those on other programmes.
- Learners benefit from a range of sport and life skills sessions. They take pride in their volunteering activities both within the school and in the local community. They help younger pupils with skills such as reading, mathematics and in their personal and moral development. They assist in a range of local initiatives and enjoy raising funds for charity.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 136912 |
| Local authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 10009401 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 735 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 95 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lynda Price |
| Principal | Glenn Smith |
| Telephone number | 01404 42283 |
| Website | www.honitoncollege.devon.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@honitoncollege.devon.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13–14 February 2014 |

Information about this school

- Honiton Community College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It converted to academy status in 2011.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British background and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The school has an above-average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The proportion is lower than average for those with special educational needs on school support.
- A very small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend Bicton College for half a day a week to study work-related courses.
- The school is a member of the Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools' Alliance, which is led by Woodroffe School in Lyme Regis.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for GCSE results, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The interim minimum standards set for sixth forms are also met.
- This school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Very occasionally, Ofsted will delay publication of a report to ensure full consideration of concerns identified during the quality assurance process. On a rare occasion, this process may suggest gaps in the inspection evidence base, which will cause Ofsted to conclude that the inspection is incomplete. This happened at Honiton Community College. Inspectors first visited the school in March 2016. Her Majesty's Inspectors returned to the school in April 2016 to gather additional information to secure the evidence base. In such cases, the inspection report is not published until Ofsted is satisfied that the inspection is secure.
- Inspectors observed learning across the school, including in the sixth form and in a wide range of subjects. Many of these observations were joint visits to lessons with members of the school's senior leadership team. One assembly was also observed.
- During observations of learning, inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and further samples of work were examined separately.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff including senior and middle leaders and new teachers. There was also a meeting with governors, four planned meetings with pupils from across the school, and informal discussions with pupils throughout the inspection.
- A wide range of documentation was examined including information about pupils' achievement, their attendance and behaviour, and the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement.
- Inspectors checked safeguarding arrangements for recruitment and other documentation detailing how school leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took into account the 132 views of parents who responded to Parent View. They also took into consideration the views of 54 members of staff and two pupils who responded to their respective online surveys.

Inspection team

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
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| Neville Coles | Ofsted Inspector |
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