

Ivybridge Community College

Harford Road, Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 0JA

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All students make excellent progress when learning a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Their attainment in GCSE, A and AS level, and other examinations is high.
- Students entitled to extra government funding make enhanced progress, hence their attainment is catching up with that of other students at the college. Students who are disabled or with special educational needs also make excellent progress.
- Because of the outstanding teaching of numeracy and, especially, literacy, students have the skills needed to make rapid progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers have very high expectations of students. As a result, they have high levels of self-confidence and excellent attitudes to learning. Assessment is used very well to set demanding targets and to show students how to improve their work.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the college is excellent. The students report little bullying and the college's records confirm this. They are especially aware of the dangers of bullying through electronic media.
- The outstanding curriculum is a notable strength of the college. All students participate in sport and physical education (PE), with many competing at regional, national and international level. Other provision, such as the 200 clubs and out-of college activities, very effectively promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The excellent leadership of the Principal, governing body and other senior leaders successfully provides the drive and ambition needed to further improve the quality of teaching and hence to raise students' achievement.
- The sixth form is of outstanding quality, with excellent teaching delivering high attainment at AS and A level, and prepares students very well for higher education and employment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, taught by the same number of teachers. Twenty of these observations were conducted jointly with senior members of staff. Inspectors paid briefer visits to a number of lessons in pursuit of particular inspection themes, such as evaluating the quality of support for students who are disabled or have special educational needs. They reviewed documents, including those relating to students' attainment and progress, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and members of the governing body.
- The views of 79 parents who submitted them on the Ofsted Parent View website, and of 109 staff who completed a questionnaire, were analysed and taken into account. A number of emails, letters and telephone calls from parents were also considered.

Inspection team

Paul Sadler, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sylvie Trevena	Additional Inspector
Teresa Gilpin	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector
Terry Payne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The college is much larger than the average secondary school. It is among the ten largest secondary schools in England. It serves a large part of Devon to the east of Plymouth and south of Dartmoor, although students from a wider area attend the college by choice. Almost all students are of White British ethnicity.
- In November 2010 the college became one of the first schools in England to convert to academy status. In 2011 it joined with a local primary school in a multi-academy trust. The predecessor school, also called Ivybridge Community College, was assessed as outstanding at its last Ofsted inspection in 2009.
- The college was formerly designated as a sports college and continues to place a major emphasis on sport and physical education in its provision.
- The college is designated as a Teaching School and works with schools and teacher training establishments in the region to improve the quality of teaching. The Principal is supporting a school assessed recently as requiring special measures.
- The number of students supported through school action is below average, while the proportion who are supported through school action plus or who have statements of special educational needs is well above average. These students have a wide range of difficulties including profound physical or learning disabilities.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of families in the armed services.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress, in all areas.
- The college does not use any alternative education provision on a regular basis. From time to time special arrangements are made for students with serious long-term medical conditions to be educated elsewhere.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Better tailor the support given to lower attaining students to enable them to succeed when they are tackling challenging tasks by:
 - ensuring that resources and materials are suitably adapted to meet students' individual needs
 - ensuring that teaching assistants and other adults are well briefed and trained to enable them to help each student make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- At the end of Year 11 in 2012, students' attainment and progress greatly exceeded almost all the key national benchmarks. Two thirds attained five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics, with the proportions making or exceeding the progress expected of them in these subjects since the start of Year 7 being well above average. The proportions attaining the highest grades of A* and A in many subjects including English literature, history and physics were also well above average.
- Initial analysis of information on progress for the end of Year 11 in 2013 suggests a further rise in students' attainment, in part due to improvements in modern foreign languages where attainment had been less high in 2012.
- Students make excellent use of their very secure literacy and numeracy skills. This is because they read widely and are taught the key technical vocabulary and skills, such as the interpretation of graphs, that they need in a range of subjects. Students make excellent progress in both English and mathematics and attain GCSE grades that are well above average
- Students learn quickly in lessons. For example, in biology, Year 7 students rapidly focused their microscopes on a cross-section of a leaf and identified the features pointed out by the teacher. They did this with great enthusiasm, having only briefly used a microscope previously.
- Students excel at sport and PE. For example, an inspector described the quality of work seen in a lunchtime gymnastics session as 'close to Olympic standard'. Many students have represented their region or country in a range of sports including rugby union, basketball and sailing.
- The performing arts are a growing strength. A parent described a recent production of *Les Miserables* as 'as good as the West End'.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is high, with many attaining the highest grades at A level. In 2013 there were notable successes in a range of subjects including mathematics, geography and biology.
- The achievement of students in receipt of the pupil premium is rapidly catching up with that of other students. As an example, among 2011 Year 11 students, more than one third of those receiving the pupil premium, made less progress than their classmates in mathematics. In 2013 this proportion had reduced to one in ten. Other information for these two groups of students shows similar convergence, such as the average grades attained in GCSE English and mathematics. This applies to both students entitled to free school meals and to children of families in the armed forces. There are too few students in local authority care for judgements to be made about their achievement.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs also make very good progress, because teachers have high expectations of them and set appropriately challenging work, and focus on improving their literacy and numeracy. Occasionally, their progress slows when they are not given the most appropriate help.
- The college's excellent analysis of data demonstrates that students make outstanding progress from their arrival in Year 7. The information is used to set challenging targets and the quality of students' work shows that almost all are on course to achieve these.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The proportion of excellent teaching seen by inspectors was very high, supporting other evidence gained over time. Teachers have very high expectations of their students and relationships between staff and students are outstanding. For example, in Year 13 chemistry a discussion about the biochemistry of enzyme synthesis and activity had more of the atmosphere of a university tutorial than a school lesson.
- Teachers use a wide range of strategies to engender and maintain students' enthusiasm for learning. For example, in a Year 12 geography lesson concerning global warming, short video

clips, notes and discussion, together with the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, enabled all students to learn at a fast pace. This lesson also showed the college's commitment to fostering students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Teachers use opportunities to develop students' skills of literacy and numeracy, such as by having lists of key technical vocabulary available, and through frequent checking of students' understanding.
- Teaching staff are well trained. The college's status as a Teaching School enhances other training programmes well.
- The subject expertise of teachers is used very well. For example, from the start of Year 7 physics, chemistry and biology are taught separately by experts in these fields. This enables students to make rapid progress and quickly grow in confidence when learning the sciences.
- Assessment is used very effectively and students value highly the feedback they receive on how to improve their work. Students also assess their own and each other's work, and are well aware of how its quality compares with that required to attain the examination grades to which they aspire.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs are given demanding tasks to which most respond very well. Occasionally, they struggle and their progress slows. This is because the materials they are using are not sufficiently well adapted for them to use effectively, or teaching assistants and other adults who help students are not sufficiently briefed or trained to provide effective support, a point made to inspectors by some teaching assistants.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students typically behave very well and relate well to each other and to adults. There have been no permanent exclusions from the college over several years, and fixed term exclusions are well below the national average and are falling. Behaviour in lessons is excellent, so learning is not slowed because of misbehaviour. Students are very enthusiastic about their learning.
- Bullying is rare and students are prepared to report it to adults, who students say deal with any occurrences effectively. They are especially alert to the dangers of bullying through electronic media, and of misuse of the internet in other ways.
- Younger students say they are treated well by older students and that differences are celebrated. This is shown by the existence of a club, started by a student, and entitled 'It's OK to be me!'. The drive to raise all students' self-esteem is at the heart of the college's work and demonstrates its commitment to equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relationships by challenging any form of discrimination, including racism and homophobia.
- Students are also taught to be respectful when it is appropriate. On a Year 10 trip to a First World War cemetery in France, students said they sought out the graves of servicemen from their local area, including the relative of a classmate, and remembered them in moments of silent reflection. This is a further example demonstrating students' exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Attendance is above the national average and students are keen to come to college, even when faced with a long, and sometimes difficult, journey. Many stay late in order to participate in the exceptionally wide range of additional activities. The school is effective in tackling any persistent absence, and students always manage to be punctual to lessons in spite of the large and complex nature of the site.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding Principal took on a major challenge in succeeding a predecessor under whose leadership the college was already highly successful. He has succeeded in further raising students' achievements by building on existing strengths and extending and adapting the vision for the future of the college. In this task he has received the challenging support of the

extremely able and effective governing body.

- Excellent teaching lies at the heart of the Principal's vision. He has extended and developed an able team of senior and middle leaders who are respected by staff, students and parents. The management of teaching performance is rigorous and highly effective, and staff have high morale, as shown by the successful negotiation of the new appraisal policy with their professional associations.
- The Principal is rightly proud of the college's accreditation as a Teaching School, where teachers from schools across the region work together to promote excellence in teaching. The training of new members of the profession also forms part of this work.
- College leaders have developed highly sophisticated analyses of information on students' progress that enable staff to set students challenging targets. This work has also enabled the achievement of groups of students, such as those in receipt of the pupil premium, or with disabilities or special educational needs, to be analysed separately so that slow progress can be identified and action taken to rectify it. These elements form part of the college's excellent evaluation of its own effectiveness and weaknesses, such as past slow progress in modern foreign languages, have been identified and successfully rectified.
- The curriculum is a major strength of the college that has been achieved through considered evolution rather than by sudden change. For example, entries for GCSE before the end of Year 11 are being phased out and this year a small group of highly able mathematicians will be entered for the more challenging further mathematics papers.
- Students rightly see the exceptionally wide range of additional activities, and the opportunities offered in sport and the arts, as major benefits of attending the college. Trips and visits to diverse destinations in Britain and abroad add to the cultural understanding of the mainly White British student body.
- The college has good relationships with the great majority of parents, as shown by steadily improving attendance rates at consultation evenings and other school events. A few parents contacted inspectors with concerns about the quality of support given to students with disabilities or special educational needs. Inspectors found that, whilst in almost all respects the support was excellent, there is room for improvement in the adaptation of resources and support by adults other than the teacher that some of these students receive in lessons.
- The college uses a range of professional consultants to give an external view of its work. This has enhanced the process of change and has made a positive contribution to rising achievement by students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an excellent understanding of its roles and responsibilities. Student achievement and teaching performance are monitored very effectively through the use of published comparative information and governors have played a central role in negotiating new policies that link pay to performance. They share the information prepared by college leaders on the achievement of groups of students, such as those in receipt of the pupil premium, and have a very good understanding of the purpose and impact of such funding. They are well trained and are keen to share the college's expertise, both that of staff and their own, through the multi-academy trust and through other partnerships such as the Teaching School. They fulfil their statutory responsibilities, such as to keep students safe, in a highly effective manner, for instance by providing first-aid training for many staff.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136336
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	426854

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2,355
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Saltern
Principal	Robert Haring
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01752 691000
Fax number	01752 691247
Email address	icc@ivybridge.devon.sch.uk

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