

Devonport High School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113530
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	357375
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carolyn Bruce-Spencer
Headteacher	Kieran Earley
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 September 2007
School address	Paradise Road Stoke Plymouth PL1 5QP
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 39 lessons and parts of lessons and observed 39 teachers. Meetings took place with the chair and other members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers and groups of students. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at documentation which included the school development plan, subject development plans, assessment information, safeguarding documentation, curriculum planning and samples of students' work. Inspectors analysed the results of 359 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and took account of the views expressed in student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at two key areas.

- The impact of action plans in areas where students have not made the progress expected of them.
- Whether teachers use assessment information to challenge individual students sufficiently.

Information about the school

Devonport High School for Boys draws from a wide area extending well beyond Plymouth. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average although there are a number who speak English as an additional language. The school has held specialist Engineering status since 2002 and was awarded High Performing Secondary Schools for specialisms for languages in 2007 and Applied Learning in 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Devonport High School for Boys is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection when it was deemed good, it has made excellent progress under the strong leadership of the headteacher and his senior leaders and managers. Their full focus is on providing equal opportunities for individual students in the main school and in the sixth form. The school is equipping students with the best possible social and academic skills necessary for them to meet the challenges of life after school. A parent wrote, 'My child has grown since he has been at this school – his confidence in his own ability has exceeded all expectations – this is the result of the school teaching students to believe in themselves.' Rigorous evaluation of the impact of the school's action plans by leaders and managers reveals that they know they are not perfect but know where they are going. The success of initiatives past and present shows the school has outstanding capacity for sustained development.

Attainment is consistently high. All groups of students, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy their learning and respond well to the varied learning activities offered to them. Current achievement is excellent throughout the school for all groups of students. Most make much better-than-expected progress towards their personal targets. The school's assessment and tracking systems monitor individual performance carefully throughout the school. These systems enable effective intervention programmes to be put in place if a student does not fulfil his full potential. A high proportion of good and outstanding teaching promotes students' learning very effectively and teachers understand how to improve their practice where development is needed. There is best practice in marking and assessment as, for example, in English, but the school recognises that marking does vary in its effectiveness between subjects.

The personal development of students is outstanding and is a key element in supporting high achievement. Students feel safe. Attendance is high and the students behave very well in lessons and around the school. The school undertakes its wider responsibilities as an engineering and modern foreign languages specialist school exceptionally well. Partnerships with external agencies are outstanding. The range of expertise on the governing body has supported the rise in the school's achievement, especially in terms of using its financial resources wisely.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

Share the good practice which already exists in the school so that marking of students' work is consistently used across all departments and ensure that teachers are always clear about what will lead to improvements in their teaching.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with well above average ability. Over the past three years there is an overall upward trend in attainment. Students enjoy their challenging tasks. Targets at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are met most especially in the core subjects of English and mathematics. Teachers have high expectations of all students and monitor their progress rigorously. More-able students in Year 11 gain higher grades because the school quickly implements intervention measures when necessary. Students' achievement and progress are outstanding. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress as a result of the caring and targeted encouragement they receive from teachers and learning and support staff. The proportion of students leaving with five A* to C grades is very high and demonstrates the inclusive nature of the school. In an outstanding Year 10 engineering lesson all students were encouraged to aim high on each individual module. They continuously evaluated their learning and were looking for improvement with the support of the teacher.

Students speak highly of the 'house' pastoral system. Parents and carers and students hold conflicting views on healthy lifestyles; older students are more positive. Students eagerly take on responsibilities. The school raises many thousands of pounds for local and international charities. One student commented, 'We might be a small school but we can help internationally – small ideas make a big difference'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and promoted by well-planned citizenship and personal and social education courses throughout the school. Students have very well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology which prepare them very effectively for adult life. The well-produced school newsletters are full of the wide range of activities that students engage in within the town through partnerships with other institutions. At a well-organised Year 11 parents' evening during the inspection, the views of parents and carers and of students were very positive. One parent said, 'I have had detailed advice on Latin in the sixth form and am very pleased'.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Well-planned lessons with clear learning objectives are strengths. Good subject knowledge and good questioning, underpinned by good relationships and excellent behaviour, support learning effectively. The school has introduced an extensive lesson monitoring programme. Assessment procedures to track students are good with regular collection of progress data. There is excellent practice in English and media. In a Year 11 lesson students prepared presentations on 'stereotyping of teenagers'. Skilful questioning techniques and marking by the teacher ensured that students were given opportunities to relate their presentation to media examination requirements. As a result they have an excellent knowledge of how they are performing. There are good opportunities for teachers to review and share practice within and across departments. The school rightly recognises that there are plenty of high quality models of teaching already in the school to build on in order to develop more consistency in sharing good practice in marking. It has this as an immediate priority, designed to ensure that students are always aware not only of their targets but also where they are in relation to those targets.

The sheer breadth and depth of the curriculum in meeting individual and often complex needs of all groups of students is outstanding. The impact, both within the school and through partnerships with other colleges and schools, on its engineering and modern foreign language specialisms has been immense and supports much of the work in other departments. These are fed through to the very effective Specialist

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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Steering Group. Both specialisms have benefited a wide range of primary and secondary schools within the town through partnerships and events. Extra-curricular activities are well organised and offer a wide range of sporting and other opportunities. There is good participation in the Duke of Edinburgh’s award and sports leadership. Very well-developed charitable links exist, both close at home through the Shekinah mission for homeless people in Plymouth and at national and international levels. Peer mentoring makes a good contribution to the culture of promoting well-being. Students receive excellent guidance about the next stages of their education, entering the sixth form or gaining employment. Contacts and communication with parents and carers are mostly strong, although responses to the parents’ questionnaires highlight a minority who would like more help to support their children’s learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff and students speak very well of the direct involvement of the headteacher and his senior leaders and managers in the life of the school. They are viewed as a powerful, motivating force. The impact of their leadership can be seen in the high quality education provided by the school, the strong progress made by students and the creation of a school ethos that is friendly, welcoming and mutually supportive. They work closely with good subject leaders who are actively involved in the leadership and management of the school. Monitoring and evaluation are strong. Managers share effective practice through subject area reviews and this is proving very successful in helping the school to raise performance in all departments.

Since the last inspection, the school has worked hard to communicate more effectively with parents and carers and has made good progress. The introduction of the ‘virtual learning environment’ and direct email contact with the headteacher are successful elements, but communication is still the criticism of a small minority of parents. In spite of the concern of a very small number of parents and carers, effective safeguarding procedures are in place over such a difficult site with so many buildings. A practice fire alarm during the inspection did not raise any concerns and the behaviour throughout of the students was excellent. Policies and their impact are updated annually to ensure that they reflect the best practice. Professional support and in-service days are regularly used to raise awareness of child protection and teaching and learning issues.

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Governors' expertise gives excellent support to the headteacher and senior staff on areas such as finance, challenging questioning and community cohesion. The school has audited community cohesion and has an action plan. Global links are outstanding. The school sponsors a Kenyan School and has tangible links with a school in China. Another effective link is with the Devonport Regeneration Company, developing an engineering heritage project which benefits young people. The school benefits from the arrival in Plymouth of minority ethnic groups from around the United Kingdom. The effective promotion of equal opportunities leads to harmony across all minority ethnic groups, no incidents of discrimination and has improved the performance of students needing additional support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

- Sixth form provision has shown excellent improvement since the last inspection. Attainment and attendance are high and academic progress outstanding. The strong continuing focus is on meeting the needs of individual students. The small group of girls in the sixth form are well provided for, helping them to make the same excellent progress as the boys. Sixth formers play a major role in the main school, for example, in the leadership of house assemblies.
- Ambitious plans and high expectations are shared and welcomed by the staff, students and parents and carers. Excellent use is made of technology.
- Key life skills, such as independence, reliability and time management, are reflected for students in the models set by teachers. The use of the 'virtual learning environment' is well-established, extends students' choices and promotes learning autonomy. Particular strengths are in mathematics and biology.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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- Subject area reviews on a small number of subjects improved results in 2010 in drama, geography, music and classics. Devonport High School for Boys is the only school in the south-west that offers Latin.
- Teachers place a very strong focus on developing the key skills necessary for examination success. All students are carefully monitored by tutors and a number receive constructive feedback on their performance when necessary. The school teaches 80 external students through its Link Partnership with five other schools.
- Care, guidance and support have been strengthened since the last inspection. In the summer term students organise their own work-shadowing; a number help at primary schools.
- Sixth formers have major roles in the main school, such as leading house assemblies. Valuable extension activities include lifeguarding as well as opportunities to work as mentors in the main school. The head of sixth form and her team of tutors lead and manage very well.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

In their responses, the majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and its impact on their child’s enjoyment of school. They are also pleased that their child is safe at school, and that the teaching and leadership and management are good. A minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour, healthy lifestyles and insufficient information for them to support their child’s learning. Inspectors found behaviour during the inspection to be excellent, noted that there were a good range of healthy options available in the dining room and that there were clear procedures for parents and carers to approach the school about their children’s work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Devonport High School for Boys to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 359 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1121 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	154	43	191	53	12	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	158	44	192	53	8	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	134	37	191	53	25	7	7	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	168	47	160	45	24	7	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	153	43	185	52	11	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	108	30	198	55	42	12	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	83	23	227	63	35	10	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	145	40	184	51	9	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	154	43	180	50	12	3	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	117	33	185	52	31	9	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	92	26	203	57	20	6	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	157	44	177	49	9	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	196	55	151	42	6	2	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 February 2011

Dear students

Inspection of Devonport High school for Boys, Plymouth PL1 5QP

We are writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. You will be pleased to know that we judge Devonport High School for Boys to be an outstanding school. We were very impressed with so much of what we saw and heard over the two days.

These are the main findings of our inspection.

- All groups of students make at least good progress and achieve high levels of attainment.
- Students in the sixth form achieve outstanding results.
- Teaching is at least good and often outstanding.
- The school provides you with an excellent curriculum which is flexible, meets your needs and is underpinned by a wide choice of extra-curricular activities.
- The school's specialisms in engineering and in modern foreign languages have enhanced the curriculum in all subjects.
- The high levels of support and guidance provided to you allow you to flourish.

Although the school is outstanding, it is not perfect. We have identified a particular priority for both you and the teaching staff to work together on.

- Share the good practice in marking which already exists in the school, building on excellent practice in assessment and ensuring every teacher knows what they have to do to achieve that standard.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans
Lead inspector

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