

Ofsted Inspection: Outcome & Final Report

Dear Parent/Carer

You will be aware that the school was inspected by Ofsted back at the end of November. This was the first inspection of the school since March 2019, and therefore the first for 'Dawlish College' since converting to an academy in December 2019, the first for all of our current students and most of their families, and the first for me and my staff since I was appointed as Headteacher of the school in November 2022.

Today I am delighted to share the outcome of the inspection and the final report with you, in advance of its publication by Ofsted later this week. You will see when you read the report that the school has been judged to have taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection (i.e. the school continues to be 'good'). This is both a satisfying and thoroughly well-deserved outcome for everybody associated with our school and the wider community, and I would like to thank and recognise all of our staff, our students and you, their families, for what we have all achieved by working so well together.

While I appreciate many of you will just want to read the report and I encourage you to do so, I am also offering some of my own reflections on four key areas identified in the report below.

Best wishes

Sam Banks

Headteacher

“Pupils are well supported by staff. They trust staff to help them when they have a concern. As a result, they feel safe.”

The safeguarding of our students and their wellbeing is the single most significant responsibility we have as professionals working with children in education, and it is the most scrutinised aspect of school performance from the moment inspectors walk through the door. Inspectors found our safeguarding culture to be strong and open, noting that mental health is a key area we have been investing in and developing. Students they spoke to or who responded to their survey were really positive about their school and told them that, when there are issues, the school response is robust. Inspectors saw the value in our 'Warm Welcome' and its contribution to a school culture of warm relationships more generally, built on staff knowing students really well as individuals.

“The school has raised its expectations of how well pupils achieve.”

An Ofsted inspection is a notoriously rigorous process, and rightly so, because it is the primary mechanism through which schools and school leaders can be held to account for the quality of education they provide to young people. We are therefore very proud that our curriculum has been judged to be not only ambitious, but also broad and equitable, so that it is ambitious for *all* students regardless of their background and/or additional or complex needs. Inspectors saw the way this curriculum is delivered in practice in the lessons they observed, where they noted how well teachers knew their students and could adapt their teaching accordingly 'in the moment'. In the report they link this to quick and accurate identification of students with SEND that gives staff a strong understanding of their needs in and out of the classroom.

“Behaviour has improved.”

As a parent/carer, you no doubt want to feel reassured from an inspection that the conditions in the school are being created for your child to thrive in both their learning and wider development. The report refers to our detailed knowledge of how to support students, especially those with additional or more complex needs, and the fact that we make our behaviour expectations to students very clear, with the result that “most pupils respond positively” and are therefore calm and ready for their learning. We do not shy away from the fact that consequences or sanctions (e.g. suspensions) are one of the tools necessary to achieve this improvement in standards for all, and the report recognises this. We also know that the word “behaviour” itself can often be used only in negative contexts and to refer to a minority of students who might sometimes ‘get it wrong’, so it is encouraging for the inspection team to have noticed that “pupils enjoy the celebration and recognition of their efforts” – something that has been a major focus for us in recent months.

“Determination to improve the school for its pupils drives the school’s decision making.”

While there are always bound to be respectful differences of opinion between different stakeholders around various aspects of school policy, what matters to me as the Headteacher of Dawlish College is that, even if/when you disagree with *what* we have decided to do or *how* we have decided to do it, you can nonetheless retain confidence that the reason *why* we have done it is because we believe it is ultimately in the best interests of our students. We are proud that our mission at this school is to eradicate educational disadvantage in Dawlish and we make every decision, popular or otherwise, with this purpose in mind. This was noted by the inspection team, who fed back that the significant strategic changes that have been made at the school in the last year or so have been made in the best interests of students, and that the school is ambitious to remove disadvantage.