

South Charnwood High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120247
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	360796
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	10–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	605
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan May
Headteacher	Andrew Morris
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised the documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, the progress that different groups of pupils are making in their learning and in their personal development. In total, 33 teachers were observed in the 33 lesson observations, many of which were done jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors analysed 197 parental questionnaire responses in addition to the questionnaires returned by staff and a sample of 100 pupils. Meetings were held with nominated staff, representatives of the governing body and groups of pupils.

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

- at the following:
- To what extent has the school built on the strengths identified at the last inspection and achieved conspicuous improvement?
- Is attainment in each of the key subjects significantly above average?
- Do pupils make exceptional progress from their starting points?
- Are monitoring and evaluation rigorous and sophisticated, and are they effective in improving outcomes and reducing any unevenness between the performance of different groups?

Information about the school

South Charnwood High School enjoys a spacious rural setting. The school draws its pupils from a wide geographical area, including the nearby villages of Markfield, Thornton and Stanton-under-Bardon, as well as from the more distant suburb of Leicester Forest East. A very large majority of pupils travel by bus and a significant number also come from outside the school's catchment. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including pupils with a statement of special educational need, is below average.

The school has a number of accreditations and awards, including Investors in People Bronze, Healthy Schools, the International School and Basic Skills Quality Mark. Recently there has been an unusually high turnover in staffing with almost half of the teachers having joined the school since the last inspection.

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

Main findings

South Charnwood High School achieves exceptional outcomes for its pupils, both academically and in their personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained and enhanced its excellent provision and successfully raised attainment, both at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Pupils make outstanding progress during their four years at the school to reach standards at the end of Year 9 that are significantly higher than average. The school rightly evaluates its overall effectiveness as outstanding.

The school achieves excellence because, from the moment that pupils start, whether it is at the beginning of Year 6 or at some other point of entry, they are made to feel fully supported and welcome. Care, guidance and support are outstanding because equality of opportunity and the individual needs of pupils are given paramount importance. The pupils speak of a safe and friendly atmosphere and of helpful teachers. Their high levels of attendance reflect their enjoyment of school. The school's inclusive ethos, based on mutual respect and trust, sets high expectations and develops strongly the pupils' self-confidence. The pupils feel that they are treated as individuals and respond to the school's encouragement with excellent behaviour. Their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning underpin the rapid progress that they make in lessons and over time. By the end of Year 9, the pupils have developed the aptitudes and self-assurance that prepare them very well for the next stage of education and for later life.

Outstanding teaching, aligned with the well-organised curriculum, ensures that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make exceptional progress. Excellent relationships between adults and pupils encourage a positive response from pupils so that lessons proceed at a good pace without disruption. Pupils sustain their concentration well, even when expected to listen for extended periods of time, and they particularly enjoy any task that requires their active involvement and personal input. Exemplary practice can be found across all aspects of teaching and assessment, although when planning lacks precision the pupils do not make the progress that they could because lessons are not sharply focused on what different pupils might achieve. Many teachers skilfully use their assessments of pupils' understanding to accelerate progress during lessons, but the very best practice in planning, assessment and marking is not widely replicated.

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have successfully consolidated and strengthened the school's well-established record of academic achievement. The school's improved performance is securely founded on ambitious target-setting, systematic tracking of pupil progress and accurate self-evaluation, which together demonstrate the school's excellent capacity to sustain improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the exemplary practice in curriculum delivery, teaching and assessment is more widely replicated and high standards are sustained and further increased.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The school has a proud record of high achievement at Key Stage 3 and levels of attainment have shown notable improvement since the last inspection. Pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress during their four years at the school and do well across all subjects. Their progress accelerates in Key Stage 3 and attainment in mathematics is exceptional. Information from the two upper schools indicates that the pupils have a sound platform to sustain their performance in Key Stage 4.

The pupils' wider personal development is also excellent. The school's affirmative ethos encourages them to be considerate and responsible young adults who aspire to succeed. The pupils' outstanding behaviour is a reflection of the school's high expectations and the emphasis on developing essential personal qualities and attitudes. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, the pupils exchanged ideas about physical changes during adolescence with remarkable maturity and mutual trust. Pupils understand how to keep safe, they take responsibility for their own health and fitness and enjoy the wider opportunities that the school provides, including a wide range of sports clubs. Pupils are happy to assume additional responsibility. Many willingly contribute to the life of the school and beyond through their individual leadership roles such as sports leaders, paired readers, prefects and working on charity projects.

The pupils' enjoyment of school is most evident when they are working collaboratively and are actively involved in their own learning and assessment. During the inspection, this was obvious, for example, when Year 7 pupils were making smoothies in food technology and three-dimensional clay characters in art, and when pupils recall enthusiastically their 'Las Vegas mathematics day' and singing songs to learn geography.

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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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is outstanding overall because so much of the school's day-to-day provision is of the highest quality. Lessons are well taught and are securely based on positive relationships and high expectations of what pupils will achieve and how they will participate and behave, so that time is very well used and lessons are briskly paced. Teachers plan a good range of learning activities and make use of a variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to engage the pupils. The outstanding lessons observed in mathematics, languages, art, and design technology paid particular attention to planning, in detail, what different pupils should achieve. Skilful teaching then involved the pupils seamlessly in assessing their own understanding and progress so that they understood exactly what they did well and what they could improve. However, this model of best practice, whereby some teachers use their on-going assessments of pupils' understanding to accelerate their progress in lessons and also through marking, is not replicated across the curriculum.

The broad and balanced curriculum is well supplemented by imaginative cross-curricular learning days and a range of extra-curricular activities that contribute well to the pupils' development and enjoyment.

Meticulous attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support, and paramount importance is placed on meeting pupils' individual needs and developing their wider skills and independence. Support for pupils with different abilities and with particular needs is

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very effectively targeted, so that any gaps in performance are narrowed. Transition arrangements, both from feeder primaries and to the upper schools, are excellent.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection the school's senior leadership has sustained the drive to raise standards by developing a more systematic and robust approach to monitoring pupil progress and evaluating the quality of provision. The school staff and governing body work hard to consolidate what the school does well and to identify and strengthen areas that might be improved. Despite staff changes, the quality of teaching has strengthened and a number of initiatives are beginning to come to fruition. Staff at all levels share a strong sense of purpose which involves meeting the needs of every pupil and sustaining ambitious targets for all. The improving trend in results and the better performance and participation of targeted groups reflect the school's ambition and determination to give all pupils equal opportunity. Strong and effective partnerships make an excellent contribution to pupils' outstanding achievement and well-being.

The school has excellent quality assurance and risk assessment systems and pays scrupulous attention to detail to all aspects of safety and safeguarding. There is a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues among the governing body and staff at all levels. All pupils are given a course in basic first aid. The school has developed clear communication links with parents and works hard to respond to any concerns raised and to review its work in the light of parental suggestions. It understands well the needs of its own community and is proactive in seeking to develop local, regional and international links to promote community cohesion. The impact of its work is manifest in the social harmony and cohesiveness of the school community.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school's provision and their child's enjoyment of school. A large majority of parents say that communication is good and feel that they are well informed about progress. A number praised the efforts and support provided by the school, but a few parents commented specifically on the lack of information or weak communication, and a few expressed concern about incidents of poor behaviour. Inspectors took this into account. During the inspection pupils' behaviour was outstanding and evidence showed isolated incidents of unacceptable or disruptive behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school recognises the difficulties in developing good communication and contact with parents, particularly in its geographical context, and has worked hard to strengthen home-school links.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Charnwood High School 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 197 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 605 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	46	99	50	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	92	47	97	49	4	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	67	34	110	56	12	6	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	74	38	109	55	6	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	74	38	107	54	6	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	27	107	54	23	12	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	28	115	58	17	9	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)	64	32	110	56	6	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	71	36	106	54	6	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	36	97	49	15	8	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	27	100	51	13	7	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	81	41	104	53	4	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	48	95	48	3	2	2	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of South Charnwood High School, Markfield LE67 9TB

Thank you for the very positive contribution that you made to our recent inspection. You made us all feel very welcome. We appreciated the time that you took to show us your work and share your views. These were helpful in confirming what staff and parents told us about your school. Yours is an outstanding school and there are many aspects that you can be proud of. We were particularly impressed with:

- the very high standards that you achieve and the excellent progress that you make during your time at South Charnwood High School
- the school's outstanding teaching, good curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support
- your exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes in lessons
- the school's friendly and supportive atmosphere and the way that everyone is ambitious and works hard to achieve the best for each and every one of you.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy school and spoke enthusiastically about the cross-curricular days and what you like most about your lessons. We observed some superb teaching during our visit and heard a lot about the imaginative cross-curricular days. There is however some variation in the quality of teaching and use of assessment. You make most rapid progress in the very best lessons, the lively ones that engage you all so actively and where you really understand how you can improve to achieve your very best. We have therefore asked the school to:

- extend the most exciting, enterprising and effective aspects of the curriculum, teaching and assessment so that your day-to-day experiences are even better.

The school is very well placed to sustain the improvements that have been made since the last inspection, but you need to continue to play your part. Your excellent behaviour, attendance and attitudes are key ingredients in your achievements.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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