

Sowerby Bridge High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 107563
Local Authority Calderdale
Inspection number 356182

Inspection dates16–17 February 2011Reporting inspectorJohn Young HMI

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

Type of school

School category

Age range of pupils

Gender of pupils

Gender of pupils in the sixth form

Number of pupils on the school roll

Of which, number on roll in the sixth form

Secondary

Community

Mixed

Mixed

Mixed

1019

Appropriate authorityThe governing bodyChairMr Phil TownendHeadteacherMrs Kate Sanderson

Date of previous school inspection2 April 2008School addressAlbert RoadSowerby Bridge

West Yorkshire HX6 2NW

 Telephone number
 01422 831011

 Fax number
 01422 835962

Email address kwood@sowerbybridge.calderdale.sch.uk

Age group	11–18			
Inspection dates	16-17 February 2011			
Inspection number	356182			

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email **enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk**.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings St Ann's Square Manchester M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons involving 28 different teachers and covering 12 subjects. They held discussions with school staff, a local authority representative, the Chair of the Governing Body and three groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of other evidence including safeguarding, action plans, case studies and self-evaluation documents. Inspectors also analysed the 240 responses to parental questionnaires, 60 staff questionnaires and 205 students' questionnaires.

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

- The progress different groups of students make during their time in the school relative to their starting points and capabilities.
- Whether curriculum provision is sufficiently well-matched to students' needs.
- The impact of strategies to improve students' attendance and reduce levels of persistent absence.
- How effectively the school supports new arrivals at the early stages of acquiring English and students at risk of exclusion.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the sixth form.
- How effectively leaders have tackled previously identified weaknesses and improved students' academic outcomes and the quality of provision.

Information about the school

At this average-sized secondary school the majority of students are White British. However, a much higher than average proportion of students originate from a range of minority ethnic heritages. The largest of these are Pakistani, and an increasing number of Eastern Europe students, mainly Slovakia and The Czech Republic. There are a number of refugees and asylum seekers at the school. The percentage of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals exceeds the national average. The proportions of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also much higher than national averages.

The school holds Specialist Mathematics and Computing College status and gained the International School award. The school has specialist provision for students with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment. The school also provides some extended services, such as study support and community access to their facilities. The school works in partnership with a number of local schools and colleges to deliver some vocational and post-16 courses. The school received an interim monitoring visit in May 2009 which judged it was making satisfactory progress in tackling its main issues and in raising students' achievement. The school has experienced turbulence in staffing with a number of long-term absentees and several departures. As a result, there is a number of temporary staff working in the school. The school has a number of students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, some of whom have been excluded from other schools.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school works in a very demanding environment with high student mobility, exceptionally low student skills on entry and increasing numbers of students who are at the early stages of acquiring English. This challenging context has been exacerbated by some instability in staffing caused by the long-term absence of several teachers. In the face of these additional pressures the school is coping admirably and on balance, provides students with a satisfactory quality of education and delivers satisfactory value for money. The school's specialist subjects play a key role in driving up whole-school standards.

In the main school, most students' learning and progress are satisfactory and improving securely. Although attainment is low, it is improving more strongly, which is reflected in the school's achievement of their 2010 targets for the proportions of students gaining 5 A*-C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, and their specialist subjects targets. However, provision inconsistencies account for the disparity in some students' learning and success in some subjects. Despite some excellent teaching, the overall impact of teaching on learning is satisfactory due to variability in the quality of planning and delivery, and an insufficient proportion of good teaching to ensure all students' learn well and make at least the progress expected of them relative to their starting points and capabilities. The curriculum satisfactorily meets students' needs overall but there are some question marks over the use of the teaching time available. The school provides suitable care, guidance and support, with some high-quality provision in place for more vulnerable students and pastoral guidance. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Students' personal development and well-being is promoted satisfactorily. Most students say feel safe and enjoy coming to school, although some feel behaviour could be better.

The transformation in the sixth form has been remarkable. Having been judged to be inadequate three years ago it has improved significantly and is now good overall. Students' make fast progress and reach standards that exceed national averages. These outcomes have been triggered by effective teaching, a suitable curriculum, appropriate student support and highly effective leadership and management.

The large majority of parents and carers are happy with the school's work. Inspectors investigated the concerns of the minority who are not and have asked the school to address their concerns as part of the areas for improvement. By keeping the school on a largely even keel in trying circumstances, raising attainment, and improving progress securely, together with the many satisfactory aspects of the school's work, leaders have shown at least a satisfactory capacity for improvement. The impact of leaders and governance is satisfactory at present. The school's self-evaluation procedures are adequate overall.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all students' achievement in all subjects in the main school, especially White British students, and girls, so that their attainment rises even further by:
 - giving students greater opportunities to develop, apply and reinforce their learning across subjects
 - ensuring students' learning and progress is at least satisfactory in all subjects relative to their starting points and capabilities
 - improving the effectiveness of early identification and intervention strategies for students at risk of falling behind, and increasing the impact of support for those underperforming to that they can recover the lost ground in their learning securely and quickly.
- Improve the impact of teaching on all students' learning and progress by:
 - ensuring all staff consistently plan and deliver high quality lessons which engage and challenge all students, and focus sharply on promoting learning, developing understanding and extending students' skills
 - ensuring all staff adhere to the agreed teaching and learning strategies and procedures
 - eradicating less effective practice, increasing the amount of good teaching and improving all students' engagement with, and enjoyment of, learning.
- Improve the impact of the curriculum on students' learning and progress by:
 - systematically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of current teaching time arrangements and refining practice where necessary.
- Changing the views of the minority of parents and carers who feel the school do not: help them to support their children's learning; listen to or act on their suggestions and concerns; or deal effectively with poor student behaviour by:
 - publicising more effectively the various support the school provides
 - ensuring they feel their concerns and suggestions are taken account of by engaging more effectively with them
 - highlighting the reduction in behaviour incidents, reassuring them that tackling unacceptable behaviour is a high priority, and sharing with them the robust procedures in place to deal with students' inappropriate behaviour, and the strategies to further improve standards of behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Most students enjoy the educational experience the school offers them. They show this by their satisfactory personal development and largely satisfactory achievement. On the whole, students are ambitious, hard-working and confident, and respond well to high-quality teaching. They relish chances to take responsibility for their own learning, apply their knowledge, skills and understanding across different subjects and problem solve. Unfortunately, these opportunities are not routinely offered. Students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well below national averages but rising. This represents satisfactory

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

achievement when set against their starting points on entry to school, which are usually well below average. This is the case for most groups of students, including those deemed more vulnerable. Pakistani students' achievement has been raised but White British students and girls' achievement requires further improvement. There is also room for improvement in the success rates of a number of subjects, such as art and design and drama, and some vocational subjects, such as the performing arts. Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that currently, most students including the small numbers of students with autism, and those with a hearing impairment are making at least satisfactory progress.

Most students feel safe and behaviour in and out of lessons is mostly satisfactory, although on occasion students can let themselves down, which is a concern for parents and carers, and fellow students. This is a high priority for the school and the number of incidents is falling as a result of the more effective strategies introduced. Students' contributions to the school and wider community life, and their awareness and take-up of healthy lifestyles are satisfactory. They fund raise, and act as junior wardens and school councillors, although they do not get the full recommended time for physical education. Students develop a satisfactory range of literacy, numeracy, business and enterprise, work experience and social skills, which will help them in the future. Attendance remains low but it is improving and the number of persistently absent students is decreasing as a result of effective strategies employed by the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory and suitably promoted through the personal social and health and citizenship education programme, and assemblies in particular.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning		
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4	
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3	
Pupils' behaviour	3	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance 1	4	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	

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?

The impact of teaching on learning is satisfactory overall. This is despite some very good practice in pockets throughout the school. In the lessons observed teaching was most effective when staff used their good subject knowledge, strong inter-personal skills, and a range of effective resources and learning approaches to create demanding and stimulating lessons. This inspired students to participate wholeheartedly. Less effective aspects observed included the missed opportunities to allow students to develop, apply and reinforce their learning across the curriculum; a lack of focus on learning, insufficient challenge, pace or engagement, which led to students' being passive, disinterested, and/or making little progress. The use of assessment to support students' learning is mostly satisfactory although there is some inconsistency in the extent to which staff apply agreed protocols for marking and feedback. These inconsistencies are reinforcing some students' slow progress.

The quality and range of curriculum and enrichment opportunities available to students are satisfactory overall, with the specialism influential in increasing choice, and developing information and communication technology throughout the school. The school offer a range of academic and vocational options. There are also visitors, theme days and visits to enrich students' learning. Provision has been extended to good effect to better meet the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those at the early stages of acquiring English, and those at risk of exclusion. However, the structure of the

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

school day is atypical and restricts the total teaching time to much less than the recommended 25 hours per week.

The satisfactory care, guidance and support students receive are reflected in their satisfactory personal and social development, and their largely satisfactory learning and progress. This is underpinned by proactive pastoral support and increasingly effective academic guidance. The provision for students deemed more vulnerable, such as the hearing impaired and students with autism is of high quality and ensures they feel secure, well provided for, and do not slip through the net of care the school offers in conjunction with a number of external agencies. Students at risk, or already underperforming would benefit from more timely and effective intervention to enable them to progress more rapidly. The advice and guidance students receive as they as they join, move through, and leave the school is sound. This enables them to make informed choices about their futures. Consequently, the number who are not in education, employment or training after they leave school is very low.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are committed and embed ambition and drive improvement satisfactorily. This is reflected in the relative success of strategies implemented to raise attainment and increase the achievement of students, and those to address the key issues for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. The management of teaching and learning is also satisfactory with a suitable system of monitoring, evaluation and intervention in place. The teaching and learning group is starting to share best practice but this has not yet led to a reduction in the gulf between the best and weakest teaching. Senior leaders know the school's strengths and weakness and recognise that concerted, more decisive action is necessary if the main school is to emulate the success of the sixth form. They are beginning to hold staff more rigorously to account and are also reconsidering the impact of their own practice. Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school and carry out their duties responsibly. Training and recent changes to their committee structure have allowed them to challenge the school more robustly. Despite concerted efforts to reach out to them the school's engagement with parents and carers is not yet better than satisfactory and a minority remain unhappy with aspects of the school's work.

The school has brokered a number of partnerships which enhance students' learning and well-being satisfactorily. These include: curriculum; post-16; higher education; business; and student support services. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and challenges

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

discrimination through the curriculum, assemblies, the school's inclusive ethos and personalised support programmes. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory overall with good practice in risk assessment, the administration of medicines and site security. The quality of record keeping requires tightening and identified staff need updates in training. The school's satisfactory promotion of community cohesion is reflected in efforts to develop a harmonious, integrated school community which is not yet wholly the case. Some good work has taken place to develop local, national and international links with cultures and communities that are distinctly different from students' own. Value for money is satisfactory because the provision secures satisfactory outcomes for the large majority of individuals and groups of students. Financial management is sound.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement		
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3	
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination		
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion		
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3	

Sixth form

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and demonstrate this through their good achievement, good attendance and good behaviour. Completion and pass rates are high. Students are ambitious and have very positive attitudes to learning. They play an active role in school life, for example, by organising fundraising events and mentoring younger students. Analysis of the 2010 examination data shows that students in Year 12 and Year 13 made good and sometimes excellent progress overall. Students' attainment now exceeds national averages. This is impressive because on entry to the sixth form their prior attainment has been largely in-line with national averages. Their success is also reflected in the fact that the very large majority of them move on to higher education, further training or gain employment. Teaching is having a very positive impact on students' learning and progress. Staff are diligent, professional and well-motivated and this contributes to the consistent success rates across subjects. Learning is most effective when staff use their strong subject knowledge, high expectations and effective planning to create a good climate for learning in which students are stretched and challenged and can

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

lead their own learning, facilitated by the skilful prompting of staff. Regular assessment, monitoring and evaluation of students' work and progress are helping to keep students on-track to reach their goals. Inspection evidence confirms that currently most students are making at least good progress in their studies.

The curriculum is satisfactory and its influence is increasing as it evolves to better meet students' needs, interests and aspirations. This is being facilitated by partnerships the school is forming with a number of local schools to expand the range of options available. The school hopes this will help them to retain the Year 11 students who are currently lured away by the choices available elsewhere. Guidance and support for students are very good and well regarded by students who value the caring and nurturing approach the sixth form cultivates. The impact of the head of the sixth form is good and is reflected in the very effective steps that have been taken to bring about the transformation in the sixth form's fortunes. These include robust monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the sixth form's work, remodelling the curriculum, developing a strong team ethos, holding staff more rigorously to account to account for students' performance, and increasing the impact of teaching on learning through targeted support and coaching.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of the parents and carers who gave their views were mostly positive about the school and the work it does on behalf of their children. They are generally happy with their children's experience at school; believe the school is well led and that their children are making enough progress. However, a significant minority were unhappy about the extent to which the school listens to and acts on their concerns and suggestions, the school's handling of inappropriate student behaviour and the extent to which the school helps them to support their children. Inspectors investigated, and found that, despite the school's satisfactory overall engagement with most parents and carers, further steps could be taken to: ensure all parents and carers feel that their voice is heard; increase awareness of the communication and support channels open to them; and in bringing parents and carers attention to the strategies introduced to tackle some students' unacceptable behaviour. They have asked the school to address these as part of the recommendations for improvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sowerby Bridge 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 245 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1019 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	25	160	65	18	7	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	66	27	158	64	13	5	6	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	87	36	135	55	17	7	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	27	147	60	19	8	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	59	24	154	63	18	7	7	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	22	143	58	37	15	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	15	154	63	42	17	5	2
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)	60	24	138	56	22	9	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	20	150	61	23	9	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	29	131	53	18	7	17	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	16	146	60	28	11	16	7
The school is led and managed effectively	49	20	159	65	18	7	9	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	35	136	56	11	4	10	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)				
Type of school	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 o	f 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: 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.

■ 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.



18 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Sowerby Bridge High School, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 2NW

Thank you for the courtesy you showed inspectors when we visited recently. We learned a lot from observing your lessons and talking with some of you. We also read with interest the views you, your parents and carers expressed in the questionnaires.

After studying all the evidence we found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Most of you feel safe but a few are worried about bullying and the poor behaviour of some of your classmates. We feel behaviour is satisfactory overall but agree that a few students' behaviour gives cause for concern. Teaching is satisfactory overall and enables the large majority of you make at least satisfactory progress. However, the performances of some of you in some subjects are not good enough and needs to improve. We also saw some less effective teaching which needs improving. Although the curriculum is satisfactory and you enjoy the theme days, visitors and visits you experience alongside your normal lessons we are not sure the structure of your school day makes the best use of the available time.

Staff work hard on your behalf to ensure you receive adequate care, support and guidance. We know you appreciate their efforts particularly those of you in the 'streetwise' provision. We found that you are developing a range of suitable work-based, social and key skills, which will help you in the future. We think your school's specialist status is helping to raise standards. Your attendance is improving but some of you need to make even more of an effort to come to school every day.

In order for the school to improve further we have asked staff to:

- improve all students' achievement, particularly those performing less well
- improve the impact of teaching on learning in subjects performing less well
- review the use of curriculum time and improve them where needed
- address the concerns some parents and carers have about the school's work.

You can all play your part by working hard and attending school regularly.

Yours sincerely,

John Young Her Majesty's Inspector

15 of 15

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.