

South Wolds Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122883
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380554
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	998
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kate Foale
Headteacher	Andrew George
Date of previous school inspection	15-16 November 2006
School address	Church Drive Keyworth Nottingham NG12 5FF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Parts of 46 lessons were observed and 46 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with individual students and groups of students and with members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its self-evaluation, the school improvement plan and minutes of governing body meetings. Completed questionnaires from 325 parents and carers were received.

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

- To what extent are the most-able students sufficiently challenged and encouraged to reach the highest grades?
- To what extent does teaching in all subjects provide challenging learning activities and develop independent and active learning skills in order to promote good progress for all students?
- How well are students at Key Stages 4 and 5 provided with, and guided towards, the most appropriate courses and pathways, in relation to their individual needs, interests and abilities?
- How effective are academic and pastoral monitoring, at subject and year level, in promoting the best outcomes for students at all key stages?
- How effectively does the quality of leadership and management, and of provision, in the sixth form promote good outcomes for students?

Information about the school

South Wolds Community School is of average size. It attracts students from a wide catchment area including local villages to the south of Nottingham and from areas of the city. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average and most students speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well below the national average.

The school has specialist language college status. It has achieved several awards including Artsmark, Careers Mark, the International School Award and Healthy Schools Gold Award. The school is a Foundation School with a Learning Partnership Trust; its partners being Nottingham University, Skill Force and the British Geological Society. It is also a member of the South Wolds Family of Schools, which includes seven primary schools.

The school received an interim assessment in 2010 indicating that its performance since the previous inspection in 2006 had been sustained.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. The headteacher and the senior leadership team ensure that there is a strong focus on high expectations and on raising achievement. This is particularly evident at Key Stage 4, where students make good progress in their learning and attain standards at GCSE that are high in comparison to national averages. High and steadily increasing attainment at Key Stage 4 has been a feature of the school for the last three years but leaders are not complacent and recognise that attainment at the highest grades for the most-able students remains an area for improvement. In addition, improvements in the sixth form have yet to have a marked impact on the students' achievements. Consequently, overall achievement is good rather than outstanding.

Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour both in lessons and around the school are good and this contributes to the good progress they make in their learning. The school's outstanding curriculum and systems of care, guidance and support contribute to the promotion of very positive non-academic as well as academic outcomes for students. This is particularly evident in the extent to which students feel safe and adopt healthy lifestyles, both of which are judged outstanding. The school's specialist language status enhances the curriculum and ensures a good focus on internationalism, while outstanding partnership links help to promote good learning and well-being.

Teaching and assessment are good overall and there are many examples of outstanding practice in the school. However, leaders recognise that there is still a minority of lessons where teaching is only satisfactory, where students are not sufficiently challenged, where tasks are not matched closely to individual ability and where independent learning is not sufficiently promoted.

In the sixth form, non-academic outcomes for students are good but achievement in too many subjects is only satisfactory. The curriculum in the sixth form is undergoing change in order to match students' needs more closely but has not yet had sufficient impact on achievement.

The headteacher has had a very positive impact on the school's performance by introducing a style of leadership that aims to empower leaders at all levels to be accountable for their specialist areas, and take responsibility for bringing about improvements in these areas. This has been very successful in English and mathematics, where subject leaders are having a significant impact on raising

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students' achievement. However, not all subject leadership is as strong. Systems for tracking and monitoring students' performance and provision of appropriate and timely interventions to prevent underachievement are very strong in the main school. This level of rigour is not yet apparent in the sixth form and, as a result, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.

The school's self-evaluation is strong. Leaders at all levels in the main school and in the sixth form have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have identified clear priorities to bring about further improvement. The improvements to the curriculum and to systems for the care, guidance and support of students, both of which are now outstanding, illustrate the impact of this and demonstrate why the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- At Key Stages 3 and 4, accelerate the rate at which students make progress in their learning in order to ensure all achieve at the highest grades possible by:
 - sharing the best practice in teaching and learning that exists in the school so that all lessons are at least good
 - ensuring that teachers in all lessons provide students with high quality learning experiences matched to their prior attainment that are sufficiently stretching and challenging, and which develop their independent learning skills
 - embedding high quality assessment to support learning in all lessons
 - improving the quality of subject leadership overall so that it is as consistently good as that in English and mathematics.

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
 - sharing and further developing the best practice that is evident in teaching and learning
 - ensuring the curriculum matches the needs of students more closely
 - developing more effective quality assurance systems at subject level to track progress and implement appropriate intervention strategies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Headline measures of attainment at Key Stage 4 are high in comparison to national averages. The attainment of individual groups of students including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The attainment of boys has been improving year on year and the gender gap is narrowing. There is some variation in attainment at subject level, although core subjects are strong. Students join the school in Year 7 with attainment that is above average and complete Year 11 with attainment that is high, indicating good progress from their starting points. This picture is the same for all individual groups of students, including the small number of students from

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minority ethnic groups, those who speak English as an additional language and those known to be eligible for free school meals. The exceptional support that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive enables them to make good progress and achieve well. Lesson observations during the inspection support this. Students have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well; this is demonstrated by their good levels of engagement and enjoyment in lessons.

- Students say they feel very safe at school all the time. Groups representing a wide range of students are entirely confident that issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Permanent exclusions are rare and the proportion of fixed term exclusions is low. The number of recorded incidents of racism, harassment and bullying is low.
- The uptake of healthy school meals is good and students with particular dietary requirements are very well catered for. There is extensive participation in physical exercise as a result of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. Such activities are accessed by all students, including those with complex special needs.
- Students value their school community and willingly take on responsibilities beyond the classroom, for example as Young Ambassadors for sport.
- Students are well equipped with the wider skills needed for the world of work and have a good understanding of the next steps in their education and careers. All students either continue with their education, go on to further training or enter employment after the age of 16.
- Students show respect for different views and beliefs and have a strong sense of common values within the school community. They engage enthusiastically in a range of cultural and musical opportunities that broaden their outlook.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers demonstrate strong subject expertise. Students are unanimously supportive of their teachers, and relationships are extremely good in lessons. Where teaching is good or better, learning is planned and resourced well to match the needs and abilities of individual students and to enable them to work independently. The pace is brisk and effective questioning techniques are used to shape, challenge and stretch students' thinking. Literacy is well developed in these lessons, with students fully utilising a range of technical and subject-specific vocabulary to support the development and presentation of their work. All of these features enable students to make rapid progress.

Where teaching is less than good, students make slower progress because learning tasks are either insufficiently challenging or not matched carefully to their individual needs. In such lessons, teachers often spend too much time talking and fail to inform or persuade students of the relevance and purpose of learning activities. As a result, students sometimes lose concentration and occasionally low level disruption occurs. In weaker lessons, the strategies teachers use to assess students' knowledge and understanding and to inform them of how well they are doing are not well-developed or consistently and effectively used. As a result, not all learners know what they need to do to improve their work in order to reach their target grades or levels.

The outstanding curriculum enables all students to achieve well and develop wider personal and social skills. In addition to traditional academic provision, the curriculum includes vocational courses, off-site provision and alternative pathways. Excellent links with the local college enable the most 'at risk' students to remain in education and to enjoy learning in an appropriate work-related environment. The Year 9 curriculum includes innovative provision that enables students to gain early accreditation for their skills, particularly in relation to information and communication technology and English. The impact of the language specialism is apparent in innovations that aim to internationalise the curriculum - for example 'Fristory', which involves Year 7 and Year 8 students learning history through the French language. The school is committed to ensuring that the curriculum remains current and interesting, and to this end, subject and senior leaders are involved in a continuous process of updating and adapting it. A very wide range of curriculum enrichment experiences is provided, for example through 'super learning', enterprise, key skills and language days. This, plus the personal and social development curriculum and provision for religious education, provides good opportunities for students to develop wider personal, learning, social and work-related skills.

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The restructured pastoral system ensures that the school focuses on the achievement and success of each individual student. The school works very closely with families and a wide range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and well-being of students facing challenging circumstances. The work of the school’s inclusion support unit is outstanding in providing support and care for individual students. The nurture group ensures students feel very safe and develop confidence. There are striking examples of students who have been, and are, exceptionally well-supported through very difficult times in their lives or as a result of on-going difficulties and/or disabilities. Students are very confident and complimentary about the school’s ability to care, guide and support them effectively at each stage of their education - from the outstanding transition arrangements when they transfer from primary school to the highly effective information, advice and guidance they receive towards the end of Key Stages 3 and 4.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

The headteacher has introduced a culture of high expectations and a focus on continual and sustainable improvement in all aspects of school life and particularly in ensuring the very best outcomes for students. His aim is to develop strategic management skills at all levels of leadership. To this end, he has undertaken extensive restructuring of management systems – both pastoral and academic – to ensure leaders at all levels are accountable for performance in their particular area and are responsible for bringing about improvement in these areas. Leaders are tackling key areas of weakness systematically and there is evidence that middle leaders are driving forward innovations in the curriculum. Target setting is realistic and challenging but the school recognises that it needs to review its processes and to consider a more individualised approach to setting challenging and aspirational targets for all learners, particularly in information and communication technology.

A rigorous and robust quality review process is in place for academic subjects and is being developed for pastoral provision. The system introduced to review the quality of teaching and learning in subjects is fully embedded, but it is relatively new and the school recognises that the strengths evident in mathematics and English need to be shared with all other subject leaders to ensure that quality is as strong in all subject areas. The school has a range of collaborative processes in place to broaden and expand opportunities for staff to share good practice and expertise. Innovative

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practice enables students to participate in the teaching and learning quality review process.

The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has been influential in determining its strategic direction. Its members discharge their statutory duties, including in relation to safeguarding, effectively. The school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work in relation to safety and safeguarding and a realistic and proportionate approach to this area permeates all aspects of school life.

Partnerships with a wide range of organisations contribute significantly to the rich and diverse curriculum experiences and opportunities provided for students. Multi-agency partnerships are extremely strong and have a very positive impact on ensuring every student is fully supported and cared for. There has been concerted action to promote equal opportunities for all students. The school makes a strong contribution to its local community via its extended school network and via a range of other community-based projects. The strong international dimension of its curriculum and partnership links resulting from its language specialism, enhance this.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Academic achievement is satisfactory because most students make the progress expected of them given their starting points. The small number of students who take applied courses make good or better progress from their starting points. Improved attainment in 2011 compared to that in 2010 is evidence of the impact of strategies to raise achievement. However, as yet there is insufficient evidence that this will be sustained. Non-academic outcomes for students are good. Their attendance is above

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average. The number of students continuing from Year 12 to 13 is high. All students progress to either higher or further education, training or employment. They make a good contribution to the life of the school and the community. Students demonstrate mature attitudes to learning, relate well to each other and to their tutors and have high aspirations.

Lessons observed in the sixth form indicate that teaching and learning are good but this has yet to have a significant impact on students’ achievement. The sixth form curriculum comprises predominantly traditional GCE AS and A level courses in a range of subjects. In order to match the individual learning needs of students more effectively, a small number of applied and vocational courses are offered and this provision is growing. A variety of enrichment and extra-curricular activities are provided. As a result of recent changes to pastoral systems and improved academic monitoring, support and guidance for students is improving. However, these systems are not as robust as in the main school and are not yet having a sufficient impact on students’ achievement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Responses to the parental questionnaire indicate that parents and carers are very positive about the extent to which the school keeps their children safe and that their children enjoy school. These views were echoed by students themselves and reflect inspectors’ judgements. Despite this, the response to other questions suggests that parental perceptions of the school are less good than might be expected. The school is aware of this and has introduced a number of initiatives including a governor/parent forum to enable parents and carers to raise concerns and for the school to take action. Unfortunately, despite a large number of invitations issued to parents and carers, the response rate and the number actually attending the forum meetings have been very small.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Wolds Community 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 325 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 998 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	34	196	60	15	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	101	31	204	63	13	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	96	30	176	54	23	7	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	82	25	179	55	39	12	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	69	21	188	58	26	8	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	62	19	162	50	71	22	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	45	14	184	57	57	18	6	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)	83	26	187	58	20	6	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	80	25	188	58	27	8	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	62	19	154	47	57	18	17	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	53	16	171	53	42	13	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	72	22%	161	50	47	14	11	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	92	28	182	56	25	8	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



26 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of South Wolds Community School, Keyworth, NG12 5FF

Many thanks to those of you who gave up your breaks and lunchtimes to speak to inspectors.

Inspectors judged South Wolds to be a good school. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is high compared to the national average. You make good progress in your learning because you behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Good quality teaching and an outstanding curriculum contribute significantly to this. You receive outstanding care, guidance and support. You told us that you feel very safe and are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle as a result of the focus on physical activity, the healthy food provided in the canteen and the good education about healthy lifestyles that you receive.

Despite high attainment and some outstanding aspects, we still judged that the school could improve further. We have asked the headteacher and his leadership team to improve the rate at which students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make progress so that you can all achieve the highest grades you are capable of. We have asked him to do this by ensuring that in all subjects, teaching is at least good and that you are all challenged to do your best and to understand how to improve your own work. We have also asked him to raise achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that in all subjects teaching is at least good, that the curriculum matches the needs of students more closely and that systems to track progress and provide support are as good as in the main school.

You can help your school to improve further by attending regularly, by really taking an interest in, and getting involved with, the learning activities your teachers set you and by working as hard as you can.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

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