

Swinton Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106959
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	377501
Inspection dates	22–23 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell 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	908
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Carney
Headteacher	David Pridding
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 39 lessons taught by 39 staff, and held meetings with school leaders, members of the governing body, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 104 parents and carers, 124 students and 42 staff.

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

- Achievement in the main school and the sixth form and whether it is satisfactory or good.
- The evidence to show whether aspects of students' personal development are good rather than satisfactory
- The consistency and quality of teaching and the use of assessment.
- The extent to which the curriculum and care, guidance and support meet the differing needs of students
- How consistently leaders use self-evaluation and precisely targeted actions to drive improvement in teaching, learning and students' outcomes.

Information about the school

Swinton Community School is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is a little above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported at school action is below average, and the proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has a resource for students who have an autistic spectrum disorder. It is a specialist school for mathematics and computing. A new headteacher joined the school 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has made rapid improvement in the last two years. The drive and ambition of the new headteacher have raised the expectations of staff and students. Students and staff welcome the clarity of vision and the firmness of action which have promoted aspiration and shared purpose. The headteacher and senior leaders have a highly visible presence which contributes strongly to students' commitment and good outcomes.

The strong impact of well-executed change is shown in the school's good performance in 2011. Achievement in both the main school and the sixth form has improved and is good. In recent years, students made inadequate progress and attainment at GCSE was below average. 2011 marks a turning point. In 2011, the Year 11 group, who entered the school with below average attainment, achieved GCSE results that were average. This represents good progress over time. Accurate school data shows a rising trend in achievement across year groups and subjects. In English, students make the progress expected nationally and reach the national average. In mathematics and science, progress and attainment have improved but are still below average. Over the last two years, outcomes in the sixth form have improved and are good. Students achieve well in more subjects, due to a more rigorous approach to tackling underperformance. Attendance, which had been persistently low, rose significantly to average in 2011, and shows continued strong improvement this term.

Effective actions have tackled weaknesses in the curriculum which contributed to past underachievement. A programme of off-site learning for lower ability students, including those known to be eligible for free school meals or supported on school action plus, led to low attendance and achievement. This programme was ended and the curriculum now makes good provision for these groups. Weak option arrangements led to too few students taking two sciences. Science provision has improved significantly and increased numbers are taking two and three sciences. An integrated curriculum at Key Stage 3 led to English being taught by non-specialists which hampered progress. This was ended and a well-planned curriculum and consistently good specialist teaching has resulted in improved progress in English.

Teaching is good although the use of assessment is satisfactory. Marking does not consistently provide precise and accurate guidance for students. Lessons do not consistently target the full range of abilities, especially for more-able students. In the

small minority of lessons which are satisfactory, the teacher sometimes talks too much and does not provide sufficient opportunity for independent learning. Questioning does not always probe and stimulate thinking with enough sharpness. The good pastoral care system has enabled students to overcome barriers to learning and provides good support transition and good guidance for making choices.

Leaders have a strong track record of success over the last two years. Their accurate evaluation of the school, their rigorous planning and energetic implementation of well-focused actions demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - students make faster progress and reach average levels of attainment in mathematics and science
 - students supported by school action plus make as rapid progress as other students.
- Further improve the use of assessment and the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides precise and accurate guidance on how to improve
 - ensuring that all students are challenged in lessons, especially the more able
 - sharpening the use of questioning to stimulate students' thinking
 - reducing the amount of 'teacher talk' and increasing the opportunities for students to work independently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is average and learning and progress are good. Students' achieve well from their below average starting points. In 2011, the percentage achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics, rose significantly to average. Results improved markedly in both English and mathematics. The improvement was less marked in science. Accurate school data show good progress by the current Year 11. Teacher assessment shows improved rates of progress at Key Stage 3 in English, mathematics and science. There has been inconsistency in the progress made by different groups but these gaps are narrowing. The legacy of the off-site provision led to continued underachievement by GCSE students known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by school action. Current school assessment shows improved progress by these groups. Students with a statement of special educational needs, especially those supported by the autism unit, make good progress. Students' cooperative behaviour and ability to share ideas and opinions makes a good contribution to learning. A few students are disengaged when teaching is satisfactory rather than good.

Attendance has improved significantly from low to average and persistent absence has reduced. Students feel safe at school and know how to stay safe on the internet.

They are confident to approach staff with any problems. Behaviour around the school is orderly, positive and friendly and there is little bullying. Relationships between staff and students are good. Students responded positively to the introduction of more robust behaviour management systems. Staff, students and the governing body comment positively on the improvement in behaviour and in the climate for learning.

Students are well prepared for the future and develop good workplace and enterprise skills through the imaginative range of well-resourced vocational provision, which includes a fish farm which sells koi carp to garden centres. Increasing numbers stay in education, training and employment at age 16. Students are given frequent opportunities to contribute to the school and wider community and the great majority of students willingly take up these opportunities. These include charitable work, leafleting about speeding, and work to support reading and sports in local primary schools. Students are satisfactorily aware of healthy eating and some participate in extra-curricular physical activities. Students are actively encouraged to consider moral dilemmas. Opportunities to develop their understanding of other cultures and to have new experiences that stimulate them to reflect are relatively under-developed.

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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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 contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. A small minority of teaching is satisfactory and there is some inconsistency in the quality of assessment. In the best lessons, tasks meet the needs of learners at different levels. Activities make students think, challenge them to solve problems, and promote independence. Teachers explain ideas and tasks well. Open-ended questions are used effectively to check students' understanding and teachers are not afraid to reshape the lesson when needed. Good use is made of interesting practical and visual resources which capture the students' imagination. Students enjoy these lessons, are enthusiastic and make good progress.

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

In satisfactory teaching, planning does not take enough account of the assessment of students' differing needs. Teachers talk too much and provide few opportunities for group or pair work and the pace of learning is too slow. On a few occasions, this leads to low-level disruption. Opportunities to extend students' understanding and engagement through questioning are occasionally missed.

The use of assessment is inconsistent. Good teaching assesses understanding effectively by sharp questioning, or by practical methods for students to show how well they understand, but these strategies are not sufficiently widespread. Good marking regularly gives specific praise and precise areas for improvement against clearly explained and well-understood assessment criteria. However, some marking is not specific enough to inform students of the skills they have achieved or how to improve.

Significant curriculum changes have tackled weaknesses that contributed to past underachievement. The curriculum is now broad and balanced and has a strong and effective emphasis on English, mathematics and science. There is rightly an increased focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Additional support meets the needs of identified students in Years 7 and 8 with weaknesses in literacy or numeracy. Effective use of accelerated reading in Year 7 tutor time also promotes literacy.

The curriculum for older students has a good range of courses that meet individual needs and promote personal development. All students take accredited courses in information and communication technology as part of the school's specialism. Good vocational provision has helped to promote engagement and increase attendance. The recently-acquired, state-of-the-art fish farm has significantly enhanced curriculum opportunities in the main school and the sixth form. The autism resource unit ensures that students are well supported to participate in mainstream lessons and make good progress. Good partnerships effectively support the delivery of the curriculum. The wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activity is enhanced by outside agencies, such as the health service and police.

Good transition arrangements ensure that students settle in well in Year 7 and move on successfully into post-16 education, training or employment at age 16. High quality advice and guidance supports Year 9 and Year 11 students well in making confident choices about their future. The well-structured pastoral care system provides clear and targeted support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and has enabled them to overcome barriers to learning. Effective intervention strategies and reward schemes have had significant impact in reducing persistent absence and improving attendance. The monitoring and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities supported by school action has been correctly identified by the school as an area for further development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's strong drive and high expectations have been instrumental in transforming the ethos of the school. Systems of accountability have been strengthened and middle leaders have taken responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and the progress of students. Audits of the quality of teaching and learning provide a rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses. The drive to improve the quality of teaching has resulted in increased ambition among teachers to improve their practice. Data are used rigorously and regularly to track the progress of different groups of students and to identify actions to tackle underachievement and promote equal opportunity. This approach has not been applied with sufficient rigour to closing the gap in performance by students supported at school action plus. New developments in the curriculum are being managed to good effect. The new fish farm has been planned and set up with entrepreneurial flair and imagination.

The governing body's shared ambition for the future informs its thoughtful monitoring of school improvements. Major financial challenges are being managed effectively in liaison with the local authority and governors. This has resulted in a carefully managed programme of redundancies. Safeguarding procedures and training meet requirements. The school has worked hard to engage the support of more parents and carers. As a result, attendance at parent evening has improved. There are good plans in place to seek the views of more parents and carers and to establish a parent-school forum.

Good partnerships with primary schools, other agencies and community groups make a good contribution to students' learning and well-being. The school works well with the local authority and a local special school to ensure good outcomes for students with autistic spectrum disorder. Community cohesion is strong and supported by a well-written action plan.

These are the grades for the 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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

Students make good progress from GCSE to A-level and outcomes are good. The number of subjects in which students achieve well has increased markedly in the last two years. Students consistently make good progress in the sciences, business studies, accounting and general studies. Achievement in art is weaker. Sixth form students are very active members of the school and community, supporting younger pupils in school and in primary schools.

Good teaching provides students with an effective level of challenge and prepares them well for examinations. Better use of advice from examining boards has enabled teaching and assessment to focus explicitly on the skills needed to achieve higher grades. Students are well supported to prepare for the greater demands of their next stage of education, employment or training. The good range of subject choices is enhanced by effective tutorial sessions and a successful general studies course. There are appropriate opportunities for enrichment activities.

The recently restructured leadership and management team has led to increased accountability and rigour. Admission requirements have been clarified and students are better supported in accessing appropriate courses. Leaders have been successful in identifying and improving subjects that do not perform as well as others.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
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

A lower proportion than average responded to the questionnaire for parents and carers. The responses are positive. Compared with secondary schools nationally, a higher than average percentage says that their child enjoys school. Most feel their child is safe, that teaching is good and that their child is well-prepared for the future. Most parents and carers are confident that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. The large majority feel well-informed about their child's progress; that the school helps them to support their child's progress; and that their suggestions and concerns are taken account of. However, the responses on these aspects of parental involvement were not as strong. These views match those of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Swinton 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 104 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 908 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	38	59	57	4	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	38	37	59	57	6	6	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	42	45	43	10	10	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	40	48	46	9	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	28	67	64	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	21	60	58	17	16	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	23	60	58	15	14	1	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)	33	32	60	58	4	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	32	31	62	60	6	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	30	59	57	7	7	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	24	56	54	11	11	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	39	38	56	54	6	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	43	49	47	6	6	2	2

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%.

Table needs completing

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 is 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.



24 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Swinton Community School, Mexborough, S64 8JW

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that your school is good. In the questionnaire that you completed most of you said that you learn a lot in lessons, you are well prepared for the future, you know how well you are doing and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job; we agree with you.

Here are some of the reasons we think your school is good.

- Your school is improving rapidly. Your GCSE results in 2011 were good.
- The sixth form is good and A-level results have improved.
- You have made a great improvement in your attendance. Keep it up!
- Teaching is good and the curriculum meets your needs well.
- The guidance and support you receive is good.
- The leaders and other staff have done a good job to improve the school.

To help the school to improve, we have said that senior leaders should:

- continue to raise achievement by ensuring that: students make faster progress and reach average levels of attainment in mathematics and science; students supported by school action plus make as rapid progress as other students
- further improve the use of assessment and the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by: ensuring that marking consistently provides precise and accurate guidance on how to improve; ensuring that all students are challenged in lessons, especially the more able; sharpening the use of questioning to stimulate students' thinking; reducing the amount of 'teacher talk' and increasing the opportunities for students to work independently.

I hope you continue to make your positive contributions to helping the school make further improvements.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

