

Sir William Romney's School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136985
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	397463
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	James Sage HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Hirst
Headteacher	Steven Mackay
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Sage

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mandy Snook

Additional Inspector

Susan Williams

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 30 lessons and 27 teachers, almost all of the school teaching staff. Of these lessons, 11 were observed jointly with a member of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors also held meetings with three groups of students, with senior and middle leaders, and with three members of the school's governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, analysis of achievement, attendance and exclusions data and at key policies. Inspectors also took account of the views of parents and carers in the 116 questionnaires received, as well as the 95 questionnaires returned by students and the 35 returned by school staff.

Information about the school

Sir William Romney's School converted to an academy in August 2011. It is much smaller than average. It serves a very wide rural area and recruits students from a large number of primary schools. The great majority of students are White British. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is in line with the national average. The type of needs these students have varies, but the highest proportion is those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; a significant proportion also require literacy support. The school has a comprehensive intake but is situated in an area where it competes for admissions with several selective schools.

The school was awarded performing and visual arts college status in 2005, and has gained Artsmark Silver and Healthy Schools awards, as well as the British Council International School Intermediate Award, which it achieved in 2006 (renewed in 2010).

The school met government floor standards in 2011, which are the minimum expectations set for students' attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory, but improving, school. The school's senior and middle leadership have secured improvement in all key areas of the school's work and have good capacity to sustain further improvement. The school is not yet good because, while there is much good teaching and some that is outstanding, there is still too much that is satisfactory and requires improvement. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Rigorous systems ensure that students' overall progress is monitored carefully and the subsequent actions taken have led to significant improvements in their overall achievement. The progress made by students and their attainment are now in line with that nationally. The gaps in achievement between boys and girls, the lower attainment in mathematics and of students in the middle ability range have all narrowed significantly, and disappeared in some cases.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but inconsistent. Although good and better teaching was observed, in other lessons work is not always challenging or interesting enough to motivate students to learn. Where students' progress is below that expected, this is detected quickly by senior and/or middle leaders and the interventions made eliminate any underachievement.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are much improved. Students are courteous and respectful and the school is very calm and well ordered. They move with purpose between lessons and are generally punctual.
- Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team monitor the quality of teaching systematically and provide good support to help teachers improve. There are strong links between the tracking of students' overall progress, the monitoring of the quality of teaching, the management of teachers' performance and their professional development.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of lessons where students make good or better progress to at least 75% by the end of the 2012–13 school year, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers monitor students' progress in lessons carefully so that all students are given challenging work and that they make consistently good progress in lessons and over time
 - ensuring that all teaching motivates students so that they are interested and are always engaged in the work
 - building on the existing good, and sometimes outstanding, practice in assessing students' work and giving them feedback that ensures that they are clear about what they need to do to improve
 - helping teachers in identifying the levels of literacy and/or numeracy required by the tasks they set and in developing students' skills so that they can access the work in the subject
 - making the most of all opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers believe that their children are making good progress in the school, as do the students themselves. Achievement is satisfactory, but not good because teaching is inconsistent.

Students enter the school with attainment that is significantly below average. The proportion of students with high prior attainment is low and that with low prior attainment is high and increasing. This has a direct impact on the proportion of students achieving the highest GCSE grades. Levels of literacy and numeracy are particularly low for many students. However, significant recent improvements in achievement mean that their overall progress and their attainment at the end of Year 11 are in line with students nationally. The school is now achieving or exceeding its targets.

Students in all year groups and subjects make at least satisfactory progress in lessons, and better progress in the majority. The progress that they make has improved significantly in both English and mathematics, with particularly marked improvement in English. The achievement of boys had been well below that of girls, but this has improved so that there is now no significant difference. While in the previous academic year students in the lower and higher prior attainment bands made better progress than those in the middle, this has also improved so that progress is at least satisfactory for all groups. Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive appropriate support and guidance to ensure that their progress is similar to that of other students, and sometimes better.

Particular attention is given in Year 7 to raising students' skills in literacy and

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numeracy, with some success, although more needs to be done in all lessons to ensure that tasks and activities take account of students' literacy and numeracy competence so that they can fully access the work set and achieve lesson objectives. Students are equipped with skills to work independently and begin to take more responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity to do so. The impact of this is clear, particularly in students' use of information and communication technology and the school's virtual learning environment, as well as the extent to which students support each other in lessons.

Quality of teaching

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The very large majority of parents and carers believe that their children are taught well in the school, as do the students themselves, with many making positive comments about how much teaching has improved since the current headteacher arrived in the school and about the impact of the more recently appointed assistant headteacher. This view is supported by teachers.

In the effective lessons, students are clear about what they are doing and why, work with interest and enthusiasm and support each other well. The curriculum and schemes of work support good planning for progression, based on clearly identified steps in learning. This enables teachers to monitor students' progress carefully, ensure the work matches each student's level of achievement and provide good challenge and support. In a few cases, the quality of the feedback students receive on their work and the clarity of the 'next steps' is exceptional, such as that seen in language lessons and in science. The school has a good system for this, used well by the majority of teachers, but not by all, resulting in students not being clear about what must be improved. Science lessons pay good attention to developing students' thinking and reasoning skills, but this was not observed in all subjects; for example, little was seen in mathematics. Generally, good attention is given to students with specific learning difficulties and their pastoral needs are supported well. The school makes very good use of experienced teaching assistants to support the progress made by these students within lessons and through targeted additional support.

Although in all lessons students' work is monitored and they make at least adequate progress, satisfactory lessons are often characterised by lack of challenge, not matching the work well to different students' capabilities and by work that students do not always find interesting or motivating enough. Consequently, the pace of learning is not fast enough and can lead to some low-level disruptive behaviour that inhibits the progress made by other students. Examples of satisfactory teaching were observed in most, but not all, subject areas.

Many students enter the school with low levels of literacy and/or numeracy. In too many lessons, teachers do not identify the literacy or numeracy level required for the work set to ensure that the level of challenge is correct and they can access the subject material and further develop their basic skills through the subject.

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The extent to which teaching provides opportunities to further develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development varies. It is often done well in those subjects where it arises more naturally, for example in religious education and humanities lessons, but is not always developed in others. However, the school's personal development programme does this well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Many parents and carers, and older students, comment on what behaviour was like in the past. They think that behaviour and safety are now good. All recognise the improvements that have been made and the work of the school's senior leadership in achieving this. Behaviour is good or better in around two thirds of lessons, sometimes good even when teaching is less effective. School data show that behaviour has been typically good. Behaviour for learning is good. For example, students often support each other in lessons, not just with the work but also in helping some to manage their own behaviour. They can think and learn for themselves and can work independently, particularly in the virtual learning environment. Around the school, students are courteous and respectful, both to adults and to each other. This means that the school is a calm and well-ordered place. Students move to lessons with a clear sense of purpose and are usually punctual. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including homophobic and cyber-bullying, and feel that when it occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The school has a firm and rigorous approach to behaviour, setting and maintaining high expectations. This has led to an apparent increase in the number of internal and external exclusions. However, closer analysis shows that much of this is due to a very small number of students. The consistent application of the school's behaviour policy is having a marked effect on improving the behaviour of the overwhelming majority of students. Students have a well-tuned understanding of how to keep themselves safe; they behave safely around the school and in lessons, including in physical education, science laboratories and in workshops.

As students' attitudes have improved, so has attendance, such that this is now above average for most groups of students. There is still a significant number of persistent absentees; the school does all that it can, working well with external agencies, to deal with this, but is not always well supported in the work it does with families to ensure regular attendance for all.

Leadership and management

With recent appointments, the school now has a very strong senior leadership team, with complementary skills, that has secured sustained improvements in students' achievement and behaviour and in the quality of teaching, such that much is now good. They set high expectations for all aspects of the school and these are understood well by students and by teaching and other staff.

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There have been disruptions in the leadership of both English and mathematics, but these have been handled well, as shown by improvements in students' achievement in both subjects. Senior leaders are generally supported well by middle leaders; the relationship between subject leaders and the school's three 'learning managers' (responsible for particular year groups) is a particular strength. A key feature of the school's improvement is the link between the systematic and rigorous monitoring of students' progress and the quality of teaching, the management of teachers' performance and targeted professional development.

The senior leadership team is supported well by the school's governing body, which is very well informed and holds senior leaders to account effectively. Self-evaluation is accurate and honest. Senior leaders and the governing body are very clear about the strengths of the school, the priorities for further improvement and the actions that need to be taken to remedy remaining weaknesses. The school has good capacity to secure and sustain further improvements.

There is a broad and balanced curriculum that suitably meets students' needs and aspirations. Curriculum guidance clearly identifies how students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development will be promoted. This is done well in some subjects and in the school's personal development programme, but opportunities to promote all aspects are not fully developed in all subjects. The curriculum supports improvements in students' achievements and prepares them well for their future, as shown by the extremely high proportion continuing in full-time education. There are strengths in the school's specialist performing and visual arts subjects, with students producing very high quality work in these curriculum areas. This is important in developing their self-esteem and motivation. Given the school's small size, and the distances students often travel to school, it also provides a good range of opportunities for students to become involved in sporting and other activities as part of their all-round personal development. The school cares for its students well.

School leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, promote equality and tackle discrimination well. For example, gaps in students' performance against national norms are closing quickly and the school is harmonious, with a very strong sense of community. Students are proud of their school and are keen to contribute to its continuing improvement; their views are taken seriously and the 'student voice' is strong. Arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements; all policies are succinct and clear and procedures are reviewed regularly with a view to continually sharpening and improving them. The school is fully aware of any incidents of bullying, and takes swift and appropriate action.

The school serves a wide geographical area and a diverse community. This includes a significant number of 'hard to reach' parents and carers. The school makes extensive, and largely successful, efforts to fully involve as many as possible in the life of the school and in their children's education and wider development. Their opinions are canvassed regularly and the outcomes acted upon.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



1 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir William Romney's School, Tetbury GL8 8AE

Following our visit, I should like to thank you for your extremely friendly welcome. We were impressed by your positive attitudes, your politeness and how willingly you talked to inspectors. We judge the school to be satisfactory overall, but improving. These are some of its strengths.

- The school's senior leaders have made significant improvements to many aspects of the school.
- The progress you make and your overall achievement is improving significantly.
- There have been improvements in your attendance, although some of you could do more to be in school regularly. You are punctual to lessons and move around the school with a clear sense of purpose.
- The school cares for you well and suitably supports your all-round personal development, although more could be done in some lessons to promote your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school provides a well-ordered environment where your behaviour is often good and you feel safe. You show respect for each other and for the adults in the school. You often help each other in lessons. Senior leaders carefully monitor any incidents of bullying or disruption and deal with them effectively.
- The school provides you with a curriculum that meets your needs and prepares you well for when you leave the school.

The quality of teaching has also improved so that much, although still not enough, is now at least good. We have asked the school's senior leaders to make further improvements to the quality of teaching to improve the proportion of lessons where you make at least good progress. You can help by getting fully involved in your lessons, making sure you work to the best of your ability, are clear about what you need to do to make more progress and behave well at all times.

Yours sincerely

James Sage
Her Majesty's Inspector

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