

Sandon High School Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124389
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	380881
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead inspector	Charles Lowry

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Trust School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	970
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Brookfield
Headteacher	Karen Castrey
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2010
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Introduction

Inspection team

Charles Lowry	Additional inspector
Clarice Nelson-Rowe	Additional inspector
Susan Hall	Additional inspector
Christine Birchall	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 38 lessons taught by 38 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body including the Chair, college senior leaders, middle managers, groups of teachers and staff responsible for safeguarding. The inspectors observed the college's work and considered a wide range of documents including the college improvement plan, the college's self-evaluation, safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey and analysed 277 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 210 received from students.

Information about the College

Sandon Business and Enterprise College is an average-sized comprehensive located to the south east of Stoke. The college has two specialisms: one in business and enterprise and a second in the arts. In February 2008 the college moved into new, purpose-built premises. It became a self-governing trust in September 2010. In the same year the numbers of staff and students at the college increased as a result of the closure of a local school. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be entitled to a free school meal is above average as is the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The college admits a higher than average number of students at times other than the start of the academic year. It holds a number of awards including the Eco-Schools, Healthy Schools and International Schools Awards and the Artsmark. The college also achieved one of the Most Improved School awards in 2010 from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust. In 2011 the college met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for 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	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than, in all the circumstances, it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the achievement of students in mathematics.
- The college is not satisfactory because the attainment and progress of most groups of students in mathematics remains well below the national average by the end of Key Stage 4. Overall attainment in the college has risen since its last inspection. Although attainment in mathematics is showing some signs of improvement, the rate of improvement is slow and the college's latest projections indicate that underachievement in this subject will continue.
- The quality of teaching in most lessons is satisfactory. Some good teaching was observed but it is not consistently good enough to accelerate students' progress, particularly in mathematics. Inspectors also found that activities are not well enough matched to the needs of students, particularly the more able, and this slows their progress. Marking of books varies in quality and teachers' comments do not always make clear what students have to do to improve their work. Senior leaders have provided teachers with a number of opportunities for professional development to improve their practice; as yet this has met with limited success.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. Students behave in an orderly fashion around the college and generally respond well to their teachers and each other. In some lessons students are passive and do not fully engage with their learning, particularly when the activities they are given to do lack challenge. The college has recently taken effective steps to improve students' attendance after a period of decline.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. For example, attainment in English has improved to match the national average, and most students now leave the college with five or more high grade GCSEs. However, attainment and progress in

mathematics has not improved at a fast enough pace. Leaders and managers regularly monitor the work of the college, but the results of this monitoring are not always used well enough to drive improvements.

What does the college need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate students' progress in mathematics so that most students perform, at the very least, in line with their peers nationally by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics
 - improving subject leadership in mathematics so that there is a clear focus on improving standards of achievement in the subject
 - using the progress data available for each student in mathematics to inform teaching and identify areas for improvement.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that most lessons are good or better by:
 - sharing the good practice that already exists more widely across the college
 - making sure that activities in lessons meet the needs of all groups of learners, particularly the most able, so that they reach the highest standards
 - ensuring that teachers' questions give students opportunities to think more deeply about their learning and improve their understanding
 - making sure that marking and feedback to students are of high quality so that students know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by continuing to monitor rigorously the attendance of students at the college and to provide intensive support for those whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by making sure that self-evaluation of the college's performance is rigorous and precise, and is used effectively in all aspects of the college's work to set targets for further development.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics has been significantly below the national average for the last three years. As mathematics is one of the core national curriculum subjects, this makes students' achievement inadequate overall. Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average attainment. Over the last three years attainment has improved to reach or exceed the national average on a number of measures. However, the same is not true in mathematics where securing improvement has proved a challenge.

Staffing difficulties over the last two years have hindered the college's attempts to improve performance in mathematics. Senior leaders are strengthening the leadership of the department and have formed a link with a neighbouring high school to share good practice in mathematics teaching in an attempt to drive up standards. Funding from the 'pupil premium' (additional funding related to the proportion of students entitled to free school

meals) has enabled governors to allocate extra resources to mathematics to support initiatives in Year 7. These initiatives are starting to have impact and learning and progress in mathematics in Year 7 are now improving. However, weaknesses remain in the teaching of mathematics and improvement has been slow. By contrast, attainment in English has improved with all groups of students performing at the national average in 2011. The college's literacy strategy, including the accelerated reading programme, has had a positive impact on improving attainment in English.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs are well supported. They make satisfactory progress in most subjects, other than in mathematics, in line with their peers in the college. Most parents and carers who answered the questionnaire feel that their children are making good progress. However, in only a small minority of lessons observed was the progress of students judged to be good; in the majority progress was satisfactory. In mathematics in particular, this will not be enough for them to catch up and so students' achievement in this subject is inadequate.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers feel that their children are well taught. A similar proportion of students agree that teaching is good at the college. Inspectors found, however, that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. There is evidence of some good practice but attempts to share this more widely have not been consistently successful.

The best lessons have brisk pace as there is a clear sense of purpose and students know exactly what is expected of them to succeed. Group work is highly effective in developing students' team-working skills and provides opportunities for them to develop their understanding through discussion and the questioning of each other. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The college's business and art specialisms provide real-life contexts for learning. For example, in one outstanding Year 10 French lesson students developed their speaking and listening skills in the context of work experience. Students demonstrated their learning of French vocabulary and grammar and applied it to more challenging and unfamiliar sentences. Students worked productively and were energised by the tasks they were given to do. In the best lessons peer- and self-assessment are used effectively to provide students with the information to move their learning forward. Teachers carefully monitor the quality of learning, listening to their students and by skilful questioning develop their understanding.

However, this practice is not consistent or widespread. In some satisfactory lessons teachers talk for too long and this slows the learning of some students. Opportunities are missed for students to show what they have learned and understood, with teachers leading discussions and asking questions of the class which invite only short answers. In the majority of lessons tasks are not suitably modified to meet the needs of all learners, particularly the more able. This lack of challenge lowers expectations, particularly in mathematics, and reduces progress.

The teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is satisfactory. Teaching assistants provide effective support and know their students well. However, they do not always equip students to develop independence.

Tracking of students' progress is regular and robust and students are aware of their target grades. The college has adopted the strengths, weaknesses and next steps (SWANS)

approach to marking. Where it is used effectively students are clear about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work. However, marking is inconsistent. Inspectors saw examples of work marked using 'ticks' with no comments relating to improvement. Inspectors also found that some books had not been marked for long periods.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

From the questionnaires returned, a large majority of parents and carers and a majority of students feel that there are good standards of behaviour at Sandon. However, a small minority do not, and a similar proportion feel that lessons are disrupted by bad behaviour. Inspectors found that the behaviour and safety of students is satisfactory. Behaviour around the college is orderly and students generally respond well to their teachers. When the teaching is engaging behaviour is good and allows learning to flow smoothly. However, in the satisfactory lessons students tend to be more passive and less committed to their studies. Inspectors found little evidence of disruptive behaviour, and positive relationships prevail between students and staff.

Most parents and carers agree that their children feel safe in college and the large majority of students are happy to attend. A few parents and carers said that they were concerned about bullying. Students are aware of the different types of bullying. They report that bullying sometimes occurs but generally the college staff deal with it effectively. Students commented that they can talk to staff if they have problems of this nature. Leaders follow up any incidents and monitor the behaviour of the individuals concerned. Students feel that mixed-age form groups help generate positive relationships. The college has trained a number of Year 10 students as mentors who are available to help, support and advise their peers. Students show good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. The personal, health and social education programme is effective and allows students to explore a number of issues including drugs awareness, domestic violence, internet safety and relationships.

While attendance continues to be below average, the college has taken effective action to halt the decline evident in recent years including, for example, the use of text messages to inform parents and carers if their child has failed to register. A team of staff have responsibility for monitoring attendance and following up individual students whose attendance is a cause for concern. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are, for example, given individual support to help them successfully return to college. The result is that attendance is improving. The number of students who are persistently absent has fallen and there has been a reduction in the number of students excluded.

Leadership and management

College leaders have addressed a number of challenges since the previous inspection. They have worked hard to integrate the students and staff from a local school that recently closed, and to restructure the staff team to make the most effective use of the resources available to them. Parents' and carers' concerns about the number of temporary teachers employed by the college are recognised by the senior leadership and they are continuing to work hard to bring more stability to the teaching team. Nevertheless, the headteacher, ably supported by her colleagues, has made a number of improvements which demonstrate the college's capacity to raise performance. For example, attendance is improving. In addition, the proportion of students achieving five or more high grade GCSEs has risen by 28

percentage points to 84% in two years. However, leaders are aware that achievement in mathematics is significantly below average and that improvements need to be made quickly if students are to achieve on a par with their peers nationally. Senior leaders have put in place a wide-ranging system to monitor the work of the college including regular observations of teaching and scrutiny of students' work. However, the information collected has not always been used well enough to tackle weaknesses and judgements on the quality of teaching are too generous. Governors are knowledgeable about the school's work, and offer support and challenge effectively.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs and aspirations of most students, for example through the range of academic and vocational subjects that students can choose to study at Key Stage 4. The curriculum makes satisfactory provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Procedures for safeguarding students are effective and meet statutory requirements. College leaders, in partnership with the governing body, endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity for all groups of students and that discrimination is tackled effectively. However, the lack of challenge for the more able in some lessons limits their progress and this is a weakness in promoting equality.

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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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Sandon High School Business and Enterprise College, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7DF

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited the college recently. This letter is to explain our findings. We were impressed by the good relationships between you and your teachers. Most of you say that you are happy to come to college and you know who to turn to if you have a problem. We know that there are many reasons for you to be proud of being a student at Sandon. However, we found that the college does not provide you with a consistently satisfactory quality of education in mathematics. Consequently, the college has been given a notice to improve. This means that inspectors will revisit the college to check its progress.

We know that examination results, at the end of Year 11, have been improving and most students now leave college with five or more high grade GCSEs. However, your progress in mathematics has not been as strong as it should be. Your headteacher, senior leaders and staff have already started to make improvements and inspectors identified a number of ways in which the college could be improved further.

We have asked the college to:

- focus on improving teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that you all achieve well
- improve the feedback that you are given when your work is marked, so that you are clear about what you need to do to improve it
- make sure that the leaders' self-evaluation is sharp and used to set targets to further improve the college.

You also have a big part to play in improving Sandon. Attendance at the college needs to be better and that can only happen if try your best to attend every day. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Lead inspector

