

# Sowerby Bridge High School

Albert Road, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX6 2NW

## Inspection dates

13–14 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not yet a good school because

- Achievement is not yet good. Although it is improving, too many students, including some of those who find it difficult to learn, do not do as well as they could given their starting points.
- More-able students do not do as well as they could. The number of students securing the higher grades of A\* and A in GCSE examinations is below the national average in many subjects.
- Teaching is improving but it does not yet result in good progress for every group of students across all subjects. Marking is not always effective in promoting improvement in students' work.
- Governors are not yet rigorous enough in ensuring that the school is doing all it can to ensure students progress as well as possible.

### The school has the following strengths

- It is a very caring school that welcomes all students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. All students settle in well and are made to feel very welcome by adults and other students.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students come to school more regularly than in the past and are prepared to make the most of their time there; they are willing to learn and enjoy their experiences.
- Those students with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment are well catered for and feel a part of the school community.
- Leaders and managers have a clear view of how the school needs to improve and have high ambitions for the school and students' achievements. Weaknesses in some subjects have been tackled successfully.
- Improved systems for checking on the progress students make in their lessons and over time ensure that those in danger of falling behind get extra support so that their progress improves.
- Students do well in science in the main school and those in the sixth form achieve well in the vocational subjects taken.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons and 39 teachers. Senior staff from the school jointly observed some of the lessons.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives of the local authority and many senior school staff. Two parents met with the lead inspector.
- A telephone conversation was held with an independent consultant who works with the school as an improvement partner.
- Meetings were held with a selection of students from all age groups.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and a range of school data about their past and current progress.
- Documents relating to behaviour, students' safety, attendance and school improvement were looked at alongside those relating to how accurately the school views its performance. Six responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered as well as the completed questionnaires returned by staff.

## Inspection team

Peter Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Brian Hill	Additional Inspector
Gary Kirkley	Additional Inspector
Bernhard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Anne Thomas	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average secondary school that has slightly more boys than girls, and particularly so in the current Year 9.
- The proportion of students whose learning needs are supported through school action is above average. Those on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs number twice as many as seen nationally.
- The school has a high proportion of students who have English as an additional language to their own.
- There are increasing proportions of students of a Romany or Gypsy heritage.
- An above-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (government funding to support disadvantaged students).
- The number of students leaving and joining the school at times other than the usual start in Year 7 is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The school has specialist provision for students with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment. Sowerby Bridge holds Specialist Mathematics and Computing College status.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that students make better gains in their learning and reach higher levels of attainment by:
  - ensuring that teachers plan tasks that get the most out of all students in every lesson, especially the most and the least able students
  - providing more opportunities for students to discuss their work with others, offering opinions and explanations to each other, so they have greater skill and confidence in communicating clearly
  - making sure that the marking of students' work is consistent across all subjects and that it promotes high-quality presentation, literacy and content.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body so that it holds the school to account with increased rigour by:
  - providing training to help understand school data
  - securing a greater understanding of how the school monitors itself and the rates with which students make progress in their learning
  - exploring ways to attract new governors so that the governing body is more representative of the ethnic diversity within the school and the local community.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Results in GCSE examinations have improved steadily over time, although they did suffer a slight dip in 2011, which the school recovered from in 2012. However, results remain below the national average. Students enter the school with attainment that is well below average. Overall, they make sufficient gains in their learning and those who left in 2012 made progress that was broadly in line with other schools across the country in English and mathematics. However, lower- and higher-ability students do not do as well as they should. The school is aware of this and has plans in place to make sure that students of all abilities make progress at least in line with expectations.
- Achievement in the sixth form for students studying the range of vocational subjects is good. However, in the exam-based subjects the few students who take these courses do not do as well when compared to the national averages, and particularly at the high grades of A\*, A and B.
- Some of the disabled students and those with special educational needs, particularly those who are supported at the level known as school action plus, do not do as well as others in the school because too often the learning lacks sufficient challenge. While the school offers these students and those new to the country a safe and secure environment, the school recognises there is more to do to help them learn more rapidly.
- Students in Key Stage 3 who arrive with low reading ages are quickly identified and begin an intensive programme of improvement. Many make impressive gains in their reading ages, some as much as two years in as many terms.
- Students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding make better progress than students in similar circumstances nationally. Those with autistic spectrum disorder and hearing impairment make progress broadly in line with other students in the school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There was some good and outstanding teaching seen during the inspection but it was mostly seen to require improvement. The school's data and work seen in students' books confirm this judgement.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge but too often do not provide learning that challenges all abilities represented in the class. This results in the pace of learning slowing, particularly for those students of low ability. As a result, some students lose interest in learning. Occasionally, students spend too long listening to teachers and, consequently, are not busy or active enough in their learning.
- Not all teachers use probing questions to challenge students' thinking; they often provide the answers without sufficient time for the students to offer a considered response. Lessons often feature activities that are a completion of tasks and repetition of demonstrations, rather than development of students as independent learners.
- Teachers do not always get the most out of every student. Too often all students complete the same tasks. These are sometimes too easy for the more able students but, more often, are too complex for the higher proportion of low-ability students.
- Teaching assistants and support staff care for students well and particularly for the high proportion of those who speak other languages and those with special educational needs.
- Marking of students' work is variable across subjects. Presentation is sometimes untidy and on occasion students' work is illegible. Teachers do not always challenge this and sometimes condone it by adding positive comments to poor content and presentation.
- Literacy is a feature in most lessons. Key words are used and spelling, punctuation and grammar

reinforced. However, there is more to do to ensure that literacy across all subjects is promoted and developed at every opportunity.

- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because it provides little opportunity for independent learning. Much of what is learned is through the teacher providing instruction rather than the students developing independence and research skills. However, in an art lesson observed there were opportunities for creative thinking and collaborative learning that allowed some students to progress well.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Behaviour is good and students feel safe. They enjoy school. Students from different backgrounds get on well with each other and new arrivals to the school are made welcome. The mixed-age registration groups are well thought of by the students. Older students speak of incidents of bullying having reduced considerably in recent years and say that they are now very rare. Students know how to look after themselves and one another.
- Relationships are positive and students arrive on time to lessons. There is often a constructive climate for learning where students show a willingness to work together, with good attitudes to learning evident. Students are mostly engaged in their learning and diligent. However, they speak of finding it difficult to maintain their attention when teaching is uninspiring.
- Students understand the different types of bullying and know how to keep themselves safe when using modern technologies. Disruption to learning in lessons is uncommon and students are usually cooperative and keen to learn. Exclusions, both permanent and fixed term, while above the national average, are reducing.
- Most students are ambitious to reach their targets and keen to take part in extra lessons designed to help them do well.
- Attendance is below the national average but has improved over recent years, with a significant rise in the last twelve months. Students from Romany and Gypsy backgrounds attend better than their peers nationally.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Improvements have been secured since the previous inspection. There is secure evidence of the school's ability to continue to improve. Achievement has improved and different groups of students are starting to show better attainment in relation to national expectations, albeit slowly.
- The school received a subject survey visit for geography in May 2012. There has been recent improvement. Teaching in geography is now no longer inadequate, as a result of reshaping the faculty and by making certain that teaching of the subject improves throughout the school.
- The management of teaching is carried out by a variety of effective methods, including brief visits to individual teachers and one-hour full observations involving more than one colleague. In addition to these methods, middle and senior leaders walk through lessons periodically to secure an overview of issues of particular interest, for example the rate of learning taking place or the use of technology.
- Leaders have a broadly accurate view of how the school is performing. Inspectors and senior staff made the same judgements about lessons that were jointly observed. However, the overall view of teaching made by the school is more generous than inspection evidence would suggest.
- The courses provided meet the needs and interests of the students, particularly in the sixth form where there is a range of vocational subjects studied. The school provides good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities are made available for every student to find success. Discrimination is not tolerated by students or the school.
- The school's development plan sets out clear priorities that underpin the drive for improvement.

Systems to manage the performance of staff are properly linked to school priorities and current teaching standards. A rigorous system of tracking students' progress is being used, although the full impact of this has yet to be seen in teachers' lesson planning to ensure all students' needs are met.

- The local authority provides effective support to the school and acknowledges its strength in providing education to students who arrive at times other than the start of the academic year.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance requires improvement, as it is not demonstrating sufficient rigour in questioning the school leaders on the school's performance. The governing body is well meaning and wholly committed to school improvement. There is some evidence, contained in meeting minutes, of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of asking challenging questions regarding achievement in its broadest terms. There is some interrogation of weaker-performing subjects. The governing body is aware of how the school spends its pupil premium funding. It ensures that safeguarding arrangements are met. It recognises the need to reflect more effectively, in its membership, the community which it serves and is seeking new ways to secure the community's engagement.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	107563
<b>Local authority</b>	Calderdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	405111

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	980
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	140
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Helliwell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Sanderson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 831011
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