

Sprowston Community High School

Cannerby Lane, Sprowston, Norwich, NR7 8NE

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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 good because

- Leadership has not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching across the school, or on the progress of all students.
- Students' achievement is not high enough in a number of key areas including English and mathematics. This is because teaching over time has not been consistently good enough to enable all students to fulfil their potential.
- Improvements are now being recorded in the rate of students' progress, particularly in science. However, progress needs to be faster across all subjects.
- Although rates of progress are improving, more-able students are still not making enough progress given their starting points.
- Marking in books and the quality of assessment are far too variable. Students are not consistently, or regularly, provided with written comments about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Students are often passive and the set work does not consistently engage, enthuse and challenge them.
- The sixth form requires further improvement. Though teaching is more consistent, overall provision is still not good because students do not make enough progress in relation to their starting points.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are now focusing their attentions well on raising students' achievements and improving the quality of teaching.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, especially at school action plus, are now making good progress and are achieving well.
- Students' aspirations, attitudes and self-esteem are mainly positive. Their behaviour is good, as are the relationships between students and between students and staff.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 54 lessons or part-lessons. A small number were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with five different student groups, with a wide cross-section of staff including senior and subject leaders, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 303 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered 95 replies to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team scrutinised many different documents, including information about safeguarding, the progress and achievement of students including sixth formers, the school's self-evaluation and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, students' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at books and other work in lessons as well as a substantial number out of lessons in order to evaluate the progress made by students over time.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gay Tattersall	Additional Inspector
David Turner	Additional Inspector
David Butler	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- An overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority, or from service families) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is marginally higher than the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is also marginally above the national average.
- A small proportion of students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative provision provided by Easton College and City College, for example, for part of each week to gain vocational qualifications.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Until the end of the 2011/12 academic year, the school participated in a consortium sixth form arrangement. This is now being dismantled. Current Year 13 students are still involved in the consortium, but Year 12 students are taught entirely on site. From September 2013, the school will have sole control of the sixth form education it provides.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching so that learning in most lessons, including in the sixth form, is at least good and secures rapid improvements in students' quality of work by ensuring that:
 - all students, including the more-able, are consistently challenged in lessons so that they make faster progress
 - the quality and consistency of marking and assessment are significantly improved so that students always know what they have done well and what needs to be improved and how
 - students are consistently offered opportunities to develop their skills in reading and writing, and opportunities to write at length and for different audiences are fully developed across all subjects
 - all lessons start promptly.
 - Significantly improve present levels of achievement in both English and mathematics, so that all students make at least the expected progress and gaps in achievement between different groups close.
 - Strengthen the capacity of leadership and management at all levels, including in the sixth form, to sustain improvement by:
 - applying more rigorous checks to ensure that all teaching is good enough
 - holding middle leaders more closely to account for the necessary and urgent improvements needed in students' achievement and progress
 - ensuring that the governing body consistently holds senior staff to account for the performance of the school.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement. Students join the school with levels of prior attainment that are broadly average. The proportion now gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, is better than it was, being closer to the national average, but with little improvement since 2010. Students are capable of achieving far better than this.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires further improvement. Students' prior attainment is broadly average. Though there are indications of improvements in results, especially in A level by the end of Year 13, the rates of improvement are not fast enough.
- Performance is stronger in some areas than others. The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are good. For other groups, especially more-able and middle attainers, progress is below what it should be and requires improvement.
- Rates of learning in recent years have not been fast enough, especially in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that learning in many subjects is now improving, with attainment and progress data showing that students are on track to gain better examination results at GCSE in 2013, with more making at least the expected progress.
- The school has developed, and is now applying, a significantly improved system of target setting, tracking and monitoring. This system is enabling the school to set all students more realistic targets in every subject they study and then check their progress against such targets. The initial indications are that this system is bringing about improvements. However, the system is still relatively new and it has not been in operation long enough to secure sustained improvements over a significant period of time.
- Levels of attainment and progress of students who are supported by pupil premium funding are improving and their outcomes are now closer to the national average for similar students, especially in mathematics. The attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals is rising so that the gap between this group and other students is gradually closing. However, their average GCSE points scores remain below average, especially in English.
- The school closely monitors the use of additional funding made available through the pupil premium or the new Year 7 catch-up funding for students who failed to reach the national expectation in Year 6. Younger students are now making better progress and are improving their attainment, especially in English, through the additional support they receive.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor the work of the small minority of students following off-site vocational courses. These students tend to achieve in line with expectations given their starting points. Their courses help them to progress to the next stage of their education, or to enter the world of work.
- The school selectively enters students early for some examinations. This is done when the school assesses that it is in the students' best interests and does not depress achievement.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure students make good progress in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Teaching seen during the inspection was variable in quality with too many lessons offering inconsistent challenge.
- Too many lessons were slow to start and featured activities that did not properly engage or enthuse the students. There were too many missed opportunities to develop the students' key skills, especially in terms of reading and writing.
- Marking varies in quality. Marking and assessment seen in books was far too variable. It was not uncommon to find books that had not been regularly marked. Teachers too rarely provide clear written comments on what students have done well and where improvements might be made. Where work included comments, students rarely responded to the advice offered in a written form.
- In the best lessons, teachers successfully use a variety of resources to stimulate and engage students. Teachers skilfully question and challenge students in order to develop their learning and understanding. Good and better teaching were seen in subjects as varied as English, sixth form economics and geography, but such practice was not consistent within, or across, the whole spectrum of subjects available.
- Emerging evidence indicates that there have been some significant improvements in science teaching, though there is not a consistent picture of improvement. Learning was particularly effective where practical tasks, linked to clear learning outcomes, enabled students to work independently or collaboratively to produce high quality work.
- Though teaching in the sixth form is stronger than elsewhere in the school, the levels of challenge presented and the aspirations staff have of the students are not consistently high enough. Sixth form students have the capability of working at higher levels and are not properly stretched in every lesson.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are often taught well. Students praised the help they are given and good support is provided by adult helpers in lessons. Such careful and well-targeted support contributes well to their good progress.
- Though a majority of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire (Parent View) are of the opinion that teaching is good, a significant minority of almost a fifth disagreed, with a quarter expressing discontent with the quality of homework. A significant minority of parents clearly have reservations about the quality of teaching offered by the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Relationships between students and between staff and students are supportive and good natured. The school is calm and orderly. Behaviour in lessons and around the school at break and lunchtimes is good.
- The positive promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key factor in improving attendance and good behaviour. Attendance rates have improved and are in line with those found nationally. Improved behaviour is evidenced by the rapid decline in

exclusions. The school has good systems in place to tackle absence, especially persistent absence, and to address poor behaviour.

- Students who have been at the school longest report that behaviour has significantly improved. They say that bad behaviour is rarely encountered and that any incidents that do occur are addressed effectively and promptly by staff.
- Students' good attitudes to learning and their willingness to work independently or in small groups, often with minimal supervision, are now having a positive impact on their achievement.
- The school offers much information and clear guidance on how students can keep themselves and others safe. Students say that the school is a safe place to work. They have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Students have much confidence in the staff to deal with any issues that might arise.
- Students are encouraged to lead safe and healthy lifestyles. Considerable work is undertaken on personal safety and there is a strong focus on being healthy. Emphasis is placed on eating healthily, avoiding the dangerous effects of drug, alcohol and substance abuse and adopting safe and sensible attitudes when out socialising.
- Parents and staff in their respective questionnaires agree strongly that behaviour is good and has improved and that the school is safe.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Senior leaders and the governing body know the school's strengths and weaknesses, although their views of some aspects of the school's work are too generous. Significant changes have been made in science and in sixth form provision, for example, as self-evaluation indicated that improvements were needed. Actions taken, however, have not had sufficient time to work through and bring about sustained improvements.
- Levels of achievement across different groups are variable. The improved data systems are enabling the school to tackle such differences and to ensure that equality of opportunity is properly promoted and discrimination of any form is not tolerated. The school records, monitors and carefully tackles any discrimination identified well.
- The leadership and management of teaching are improving but checks are not rigorous enough to ensure that teaching is at least consistently good and that all teachers are always marking and assessing work to an acceptable standard. This is partly because senior leaders do not check closely enough on quality assurance work undertaken by subject leaders.
- The subjects that students study have been carefully planned. Senior staff are excited by the opportunities that are now arising to develop subject options further. This is because the dismantling of the sixth form consortium offers the school more freedom to plan its own provision.
- There is a good commitment to promoting students' responsibility. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, for example, offer much support for a local wildlife centre. Charity fund-raising, work on different religions and societies, local history studies and the

emphasis placed on behaving well and acting with good sense ensure the good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding, including risk-assessments compiled for off-site education, meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority has undertaken regular reviews of the school because it was concerned that the education offered has not been of an overall good standard. The local authority has shared its concerns with senior staff and governors and has helped to secure improvements. The recent changes in science reflect the success of the good cooperation that has taken place. The local authority believes that the school is now improving and is moving to a position where it might soon be judged to be good overall. As the school improves, the level of support offered is decreasing.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports the school well and has been helpful in ensuring that recent changes, such as the re-organisation of the sixth form, have progressed smoothly. Through the training they have been offered by the local authority, governors are improving their monitoring role, including taking a keener interest in the progress students make. Their analysis of examination and other data is more effective than it was and is helping to fuel improvements, such as changes in the teaching of science. Governors are involved in ensuring that there is a close link between teachers' salary progression and the effectiveness of classroom teaching. They thoroughly monitor expenditure, including the way extra funding through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up is spent. They rightly judge that the school is improving. They also know where further improvements are needed. They praise the work of the senior team for keeping them informed.
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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

Unique reference number	121162
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	402011

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1620
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Hardman
Headteacher	Andrew John
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2009
Telephone number	01603 485266
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