

Sandon Business and Enterprise and Arts College

Sandon Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7DF

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Students make expected progress overall but not in all subjects. They join in Year 7 with broadly average attainment. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is below average in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above was significantly below the average in 2012. A significant proportion of students underperformed in mathematics.
- Students' targets are not sufficiently challenging and do not ensure that the progress made by underperforming students is accelerated.
- Teaching still requires improvement and its quality is not monitored well enough in relation to the progress students are making.
- Students' behaviour is not consistently good. In weaker lessons, there is low level disruption which impedes all students' learning.
- Leaders and managers do not consistently monitor school policies to ensure all staff follow them.
- Governors do not sufficiently challenge leaders and hold the school to account for the progress made by students.

The school has the following strengths

- English and religious education are taught well.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make better progress in English and mathematics than they do nationally.
- Recent appointments in the mathematics department have improved leadership.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons. Four observations were made jointly with the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the vice-chair of the governing body, the local authority governor, a member of the local authority and two members of the Trust.
- The views of the 33 parents who responded to the on line questionnaire (Parent View), were analysed. Inspectors took account of the three parents who spoke to the inspection team. The results of 47 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- Inspectors analysed the previous three years examination results. They analysed the school's data on the progress students have made from their starting points and their current progress. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including minutes of meetings, curriculum plans, records relating to safeguarding and behaviour and data on attendance and exclusions. They looked at the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance and also its improvement plan.

Inspection team

Michelle Parker, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca Lawton	Additional Inspector
Barbara O'Brien	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Seconded Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is an average size secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below that usually seen.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, extra funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and students from service families, is well above average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who do not speak English as a first language are well below average.
- All Year 11 students are entered early for English and mathematics.
- The school uses the Unity project, to support students at risk of exclusion.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of a Trust with Stoke-on-Trent College, Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College, Keele University and Staffordshire University. MERIT and REACH are used to provide alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching at least good by ensuring:
 - consistent use of the school's literacy and marking policies in all subjects
 - that students explain their ideas more clearly orally
 - that teachers take better account of students' prior learning so that work is appropriately challenging and enables all students to make at least good progress in every lesson.
- Ensure all students make accelerated progress in mathematics by implementing the numeracy policy across the curriculum so that every opportunity is taken to practise and apply students' mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Ensure that students' behaviour is at least good, through the consistent use of the behaviour policy by all staff so that students understand the high expectations of their conduct in and outside of lessons.
- Make sure that the monitoring of teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard in all subjects through ensuring that:
 - leaders at all levels regularly review and update students' targets to maintain at least good progress
 - teachers' performance is managed so that it promotes at least good students' progress
 - governors hold leaders and managers at all levels to account for students' progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2012, 51 % of students gained five A*-C grades, including English and mathematics. This was a small improvement on the previous year. Students' achievement in English was above the national average. Students' achievement in mathematics was significantly below average. This was also the case in science and modern foreign languages. These low standards are now being rigorously tackled, with the result that progress and standards are now improving rapidly.
- In the majority of other subjects, students' attainment was broadly average.
- Too few students make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Students are developing better skills in reading and writing but they do not always explain their ideas clearly in conversations. Teaching in most subjects identifies technical vocabulary but opportunities are missed to ensure students apply this when talking about their learning. Improved leadership in mathematics has identified the need for strong links across the curriculum to support the development of students' mathematical understanding.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals make better progress than their peers, as a result of the extra support they receive from the pupil premium funding. This provides extra one-to-one and small group support. In 2012, the gap between Year 11 students known to be eligible for free school meals and others was a third of a grade in English and half a grade in mathematics. This year the gap is closing rapidly.
- Students in Year 7 make 'accelerated' progress in reading and mathematics because of the additional support they receive through the catch-up premium.
- The reading ages of all students are accurately assessed through a standardised test. This information is used increasingly effectively by all subject leaders to check students' understanding of text-books and to improve their reading.
- Teachers do not focus enough on improving students' literacy skills across all subjects, which means opportunities are missed to practise and reinforce learning from English lessons.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable. This year, more students are making better than expected progress. Students with a statement of special educational needs make better progress than others. This is because teaching assistants know their students well and intervention support programmes are carefully matched to students' needs.
- Students for whom English is an additional language make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Students attending alternative provision make at least expected progress. This is because they have specially tailored programmes, which help them overcome obstacles to their learning.
- The school's policy of entering all students for early entry GCSE English and mathematics has improved their final grades. This is because those who do not reach their target grades are re-entered for the examinations.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In lessons which require improvement, students are not encouraged enough to explain their views using technical terms and teachers' questions do not un-pick students' misconceptions. Consequently, opportunities are missed to correct and deepen students' understanding.
- The pace of learning in some lessons is too slow. Weaker teaching fails to engage students and, because expectations are too low, does not motivate them to persevere with challenging tasks.
- Marking is too often superficial and written comments do not explain what students need to do to improve their work.

- In most of the lessons observed, opportunities were missed to develop and extend students' numeracy skills.
- Students made good progress when opportunities were provided for them to develop their ideas through group and paired work. These enabled them to tackle successfully more demanding tasks. Students thought more deeply and applied learning from earlier work to solve problems well when teachers' questions probed their understanding and encouraged them to give considered answers.
- The proportion of teaching which is at least good is increasing. Teachers' planning has improved and the best provides opportunities for students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills systematically.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support disabled students and those with special educational needs. This is because teachers share their planning with them well in advance of the lesson and make their expectations of their role clear.
- The school has a wide range of carefully-tailored support programmes. The recently introduced mentoring of Year 7 students by students from the partner Sixth form College is improving their confidence in, and understanding of mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour was good in most of the lessons observed. Some parents and staff are concerned about the behaviour of students. Inspectors observed that in lessons where teaching required improvement, there was low level disruption because the school behaviour policy was not applied consistently. This prevented some students from learning.
- Students are well mannered and polite. Relationships between staff and students are good. Students stated that they feel safe. Students are confident that bullying is dealt with swiftly. They understand how to keep themselves safe, for example, through awareness of e-safety.
- Exclusions are decreasing. Detailed analysis of incidents has enabled the school to identify students in need of support. The reflection room is used well to prevent students being excluded. Earlier in the year, leaders took an appropriately firm stand against racism, which led to a significant number of exclusions. Inspectors observed that homophobic bullying is not yet dealt with consistently.
- Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Good attendance is celebrated in letters sent home, presentation of rewards, in assemblies and in posters around the school. Students have written the school's attendance policy and understand it well.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior leadership team have begun to tackle weaknesses in teaching with greater consistency. The whole staff is supportive of their aims. There is a well thought out monitoring cycle which is being followed. It does not take sufficient account, however, of the link to students' progress when judging the impact of good leadership and teaching.
- Leaders do not monitor well enough the way in which staff follow through agreed school policies to promote learning. Leaders and managers do not ensure that targets are updated in all students' exercise books. Checks on students' book work do not ensure that all staff consistently apply the school marking policy. Line management systems are not sufficiently tight to ensure all subject leaders are contributing to improving teaching.
- The leadership of mathematics is beginning to tackle weaknesses in teaching and so to improve students' progress in that subject. Students' work in mathematics is not yet marked consistently well and opportunities for students to correct and improve their work are not always provided.
- Teaching has begun to improve in science and modern foreign languages. Teachers' expectations of students in these subjects have improved and are reflected in better planning

and questioning.

- Performance management is used effectively to tackle inadequate teaching and leadership. Targets are appropriately matched to the school development plans, but they are not sufficiently measurable and are not linked clearly enough to students making at least good progress. Teachers' performance management is regularly monitored and training is provided to support the improvement in teaching. Good practice is identified effectively and shared.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide a range of well-tailored support to individuals and small groups. This has enabled students to gain confidence as effective learners.
- The range of courses and subjects is broad and balanced. Opportunities for numeracy across the curriculum are being developed. The shortening of Key Stage 3 has had a positive impact on improving students' interest in their learning. Good links through Trust partnerships has enhanced the opportunities for students to aspire to higher education and training.
- Evidence from Parent View, and from parents who spoke to inspectors, indicates that the school works well with the majority of parents.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection meet statutory requirements. Equality of opportunity is promoted soundly and discrimination in all its forms is rejected.
- The local authority provides appropriate support and challenge to the school through its regular monitoring visits.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governance of the school requires improvement. This is because governors do not fully understand the school's strengths and areas for development. A monitoring group of governors meets regularly. The group is provided with an appropriate range of information but does not sufficiently hold leaders to account for improving students' progress. Link governors do not regularly come into school and are not sufficiently clear about their role. The recent addition of an experienced local authority governor who is working closely with the vice-chair of the governing body has increased the capacity of governance and attendance at meetings has improved.
 - Governors know about the targets that are set for teachers to improve their teaching. They understand how good teaching is rewarded and under performance is tackled.
 - Governors effectively monitor how the pupil premium funding is spent and understand how strategies have made a difference to the achievement of specific groups of students.
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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	124389
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	408855

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	911
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Brookfield
Headteacher	Karen Castrey
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2012
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