

Southfield Technology College

Moorclose Road, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 5BH

Inspection dates

13–14 November 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement has been inadequate since the previous inspection. Standards in 2012 dropped to well below the national average. Despite an improvement this year, overall standards are still below average. The progress students make, particularly in English, remains inadequate.
- Boys' achievement is far behind that of girls in both English and mathematics. The most-able students make inadequate progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching has not managed to tackle the large pockets of underachievement that still exist and is inadequate.
- Work often lacks challenge, particularly for the most-able students. This is because teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low.
- Attendance has been very low in the past. Many students have underachieved because they just did not attend school regularly enough. Attendance is improving but not at a fast enough pace.
- School leaders have an inflated view of the school's performance. Targets for improvement are not high enough. As a result school leaders, including governors, have not been effective in making sure all students achieve well.
- The school is financially unstable.
- The sixth form requires improvement because too few students progress to achieve the top grades in examinations.

The school has the following strengths

- Beautiful art work and eye-catching displays around the school stimulate the imagination and raise aspiration.
- The school makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The wide range of activities available after school, trips abroad and the 'Adventure Learning' course help to broaden students' horizons and enrich their lives.
- Students show respect to one another and their teachers. They usually demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 part lessons including several observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. An inspector also observed a group of students from Years 7 and 8 reading to a member of staff. Inspectors observed form time and attended an assembly.
- During the inspection meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, students and representatives of the local authority.
- The inspection team studied a wide range of documentation including information on students' achievement, records of behaviour and attendance, a selection of school policies, the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for improvement. Inspectors also examined records of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and 26 questionnaires completed by staff.
- 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

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter William Harrison	Additional Inspector
Nigel Drew	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Southfield Technology College is a much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The sixth form is shared with Stainburn School and Science College, on the Southfield site.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is well above the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The vast majority of students are from a White British background and there are slightly more girls than boys in the school.
- A very small number of students attend work-related training away from school for all or part of the week. The school uses the West Cumbrian Achievement Zone and West Lakes College to provide this training.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching in order to accelerate progress and raise standards, particularly for boys, more-able students and all students in English, by:
 - making sure teachers adapt their teaching so that all students are engaged and interested in the work they are given
 - increasing the level of stretch and challenge in lessons so that the more-able students make good or better progress
 - ensuring teachers across all subjects develop students' literacy skills by correcting spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes
 - giving students opportunities to act on the guidance they are given to improve their work and checking up to see they have followed such advice.
- Make sure attendance improves at a faster rate by:
 - exploring effective practice to raise attendance used by other schools
 - enlisting the support of all parents, carers and students more effectively
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by tackling areas of underperformance and also by

increasing the proportion of students gaining the top grades in examinations.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - raising expectations by making targets more challenging throughout the school and thereby raising achievement
 - refining the school development plan so that key actions are more precisely focused on areas of underperformance
 - working with external partners to secure the financial stability of the school in the short and medium term
 - undertaking an external review of governance to make sure governors have a realistic view regarding the school's performance and challenge the school more effectively to raise standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- In 2012, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was significantly below the national average. The proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics was also well below the national average.
- In 2013, standards overall remained below average. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE improved but was still below average. Performance in mathematics improved but students still made inadequate progress in English.
- Although this year boys made reasonable progress in some subjects, their achievement still trails far behind that of girls, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Students underperformed in a wide range of subjects, such as geography, languages, art and music. Information on current progress provided by the school indicates that students are still making inadequate progress, especially in Key Stage 3.
- More-able students do not make the progress they should in a wide range of subjects because teaching is not challenging enough. As a result, a far smaller proportion of these students than seen nationally gain five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and fewer students than average gain the top grades, that is A* and A, in examinations.
- In 2012 the attainment of students supported through the pupil premium was similar to that of other students. Although the gap widened fractionally in 2013, the progress of students receiving this support is comparable with other students in the school.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs varies considerably across the school. Some students make good progress given their starting points. However, other students make weaker progress because the support they receive is not sufficiently geared to their changing requirements as they move up through the school.
- The school has directed funds available for the Year 7 catch-up programme appropriately. Students who enter the school with weak reading and writing skills are given intensive support to make up lost ground.
- There has been a drive to encourage a love for reading across the school and there is some evidence that this is starting to have an impact. Students were seen, during the inspection, enjoying the opportunity to read books in form time and they told inspectors that they regularly borrow books from the school library. Systems to promote numeracy are slowly becoming embedded in other subjects, such as science.
- The very small proportion of students who do work-related training enjoy their placements and all students last year gained a qualification in both English and mathematics.
- The school has entered students early for examinations in mathematics. School leaders feel that this has often helped to motivate students. The school does not allow students to give the subject up and students have to re-sit examinations if they do not achieve their target grade. This has helped some students to achieve well in this subject. However, this policy has not been helpful to the most-able students as only half of the students that should have achieved the top grades actually did so.
- Students' achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because not enough students gain the top grades, that is A*, A and B grades at Advanced Level. Retention rates are low and too many students do not complete the courses they started on. Nevertheless, overall most students make reasonable progress in Years 12 and 13. Students receive useful guidance about the next stages in their lives and many go on to university or employment.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate over time because it has not been successful in tackling large areas of

student underachievement. Teachers have not adapted their lessons sufficiently to close the gap between boys' performance and that of girls. Therefore, boys have underachieved, year after year.

- Sometimes teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. Teachers do not always plan their lessons to include activities that will challenge all students. Consequently, some students, particularly the most able, are held back and do not make adequate progress.
- In general, teachers mark students' work regularly. For the most part, teachers provide useful guidance to students on how to improve their work. However, they do not always give students the chance to act on this advice. As a consequence, students do not make the gains in their learning that they might make if they were given the opportunity to put this advice into practice.
- Weak marking in some subjects allows spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes to go unchecked. As a result, students make repeated errors. In this way, teachers are compounding weaknesses in literacy, rather than driving improvements in students' skills.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well in some lessons. For example, in one Year 10 English lesson a teaching assistant helped a small group of students to work at a different pace to other students, providing effective support for their learning.
- The school has been dependent on a series of temporary teachers of English, leading to inadequate achievement in this key subject.
- Good quality teaching nevertheless does exist in some subjects. For example, in one Year 11 German lesson, a brisk pace, engaging work and excellent subject knowledge on the part of the teacher helped students enjoy the work and make good progress.
- School leaders have introduced systems to check up on the quality of teaching and teachers receive constructive advice on how to get better. There is some evidence to show that this is starting to improve the practice in some classrooms as much of the teaching observed during the inspection was of good quality. However, this improvement is not yet embedded across all subjects and it is too early to see evidence of a sustained and positive impact on learning.
- Overall, teaching in the sixth form is of better quality, leading to students making reasonable progress in Key Stage 5.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour and safety of students require improvement because attendance is still not good enough. Historically, attendance has been very low but it is improving. The school has successfully reduced the rate of persistent absenteeism.
- Students who met with inspectors said that they feel safe in school. Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, also expressed the opinion that they feel the school helps to keep their children safe.
- Students are taught to understand the dangers they might meet in the outside world through discussions in lessons and in assemblies. Students have a good knowledge of e-safety. Governors and staff have also had training on this issue. Furthermore, the school is pro-active in raising parents and carers' awareness of e-safety.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good with students eager to learn. Procedures to manage behaviour are well understood by students who say that their lessons are rarely disrupted by poor conduct.
- Parents and carers say that they feel that the school makes sure its students are well behaved. This view was also supported by staff who responded to the questionnaire.
- In general, students are polite. They show respect to one another and their teachers. On the whole they are punctual to lessons.
- Students are aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and that of a homophobic nature. They say there is little bullying in school and there are no areas where they feel unsafe. When bullying does occur, staff step in quickly to sort it out. Students know who to turn to if they have a problem. They feel that they can rely on staff to do their best to help

them.

- Rates of exclusion are well-below average for all groups of students. There are very few racist incidents. When they do occur swift and appropriate action is taken to stop this happening.
- Students in the sixth form work well in lessons and they are good role models for younger students. Nevertheless, attendance in the sixth form mirrors that of the rest of the school, and is low.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- School leaders did not act effectively enough to tackle the areas of improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, standards declined further in 2012 to well below the national average. Although examination results improved in some subjects in 2013, overall standards are still below average and achievement in English remains particularly weak. School leaders are not demonstrating the capacity to improve this school sufficiently quickly across all areas of its work.
- Targets for improvement are simply not challenging enough. School leaders have repeatedly set targets that, even when they are reached, do not represent good achievement. Therefore, the school has not kept pace with improvements nationally, particularly in English.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are linked to staff development. Teachers receive support to improve their teaching and pay increases are held back when teachers fail to achieve their targets. However, targets are insufficiently challenging and procedures to improve the overall quality of teaching have not yet led to substantial improvements in teaching that can be seen in improved student achievement.
- Self-evaluation is over-generous and the school's analysis of its performance does not identify precisely enough where the weaknesses are. As a result plans for improvement are not always focused on the correct priorities.
- The number of students on the school roll at Southfield has fallen year-on-year leading to a drop in the school's income. This factor, in combination with heavy outgoings to maintain premises designed to accommodate far greater numbers, has resulted in the school becoming insolvent. School leaders and the local authority acknowledge that the school is no longer sustainable in its present form.
- School leaders are fiercely loyal to their school and have fought to preserve it. Much time and energy have been consumed in drawing up plans trying to secure a viable future for the school.
- The school does not successfully promote equal opportunities as it has not effectively tackled the fact that boys' achievement trails so far behind that of girls.
- Overall, subject leaders have been ineffective in making sure students achieve well. New leadership in English shows some promise but it is too early to see clear evidence of impact on improving standards. Dynamic, enthusiastic leadership in mathematics has helped to improve results in this subject.
- Students have the chance to reflect on complex ethical questions and issues affecting society, such as racism, in lessons. The 'Adventure Learning' programme in Years 7 and 8 is imaginative; it gives students opportunities to broaden their horizons through visits to museums, art galleries and other places of interest.
- Students also benefit from the chance to do exciting activities by visiting the Eskdale outdoor education centre. This makes a good contribution to students' physical well-being, as does a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education.
- Students spoke enthusiastically of the many sporting activities available after school, and trips abroad also help to enrich students' lives. High quality, eye-catching displays around the school stimulate the imagination, helping to raise aspiration. In this way, the school supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The school engages well with parents and carers; for example, school leaders were successful in gaining parental support for the plans they put forward to secure the future of the school. Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were

overwhelmingly positive. The vast majority said they would recommend this school to others.

- The school has enlisted the support of other schools to improve its practice. This has helped to improve some teaching, for example in English. Constructive partnerships have been forged with a local further education college. This offers opportunities for students to progress well in the next stages of their lives; as a result the numbers of students who do not go on to further education, training or employment are low.
- Leadership and management of teaching in the sixth form require improvement because there are variations in performance across subjects. Performance in English, for example, is particularly weak. The sixth form provides a good range of academic courses and many students go on to university or employment.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and there is evidence of exemplary practice in this area.
- The local authority provided additional support and challenge when results dropped so markedly in 2012. However the level of support and challenge offered did not bring about sufficient tangible improvement in students' achievement. Due to a variety of external factors the local authority has been unable to take timely and decisive action to resolve uncertainties regarding the school's future. The support provided by the local authority has not improved the quality of teaching across all subjects.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not have a sufficiently sharp grasp of the true picture regarding the school's performance, particularly against a background of improvement nationally. Governors are linked to departments and they check up on the quality of teaching. They have held back pay rises from underperforming teachers. However, they have failed to challenge the school quickly enough. As a result underachievement continues to plague this school.
 - Governors bring substantial expertise from the business world and realise that the financial situation the school finds itself in is untenable. They have worked diligently to find solutions to the budget deficit but have repeatedly come up against obstacles to their plans. Governors have been unstinting in their loyalty and support to the school. They have a good knowledge of how the funds for students eligible for support through the pupil premium have been spent and have made sure that these students have not fallen behind others.

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	112394
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	428910

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	466
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Butler
Headteacher	Lynda Dalkin
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2011
Telephone number	01900 601944
Fax number	01900 607469
Email address	office@southfieldtc.org.uk

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