

Sawtry Community College

Fen Lane, Sawtry, Huntingdon, PE28 5TQ

Inspection dates

4–5 June 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The principal and governors have not fulfilled their responsibility to ensure that statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- The systems and procedures for monitoring the welfare of students requiring additional support are insufficiently robust to give full confidence that they will be protected from harm.
- The overall effectiveness of the academy has declined since the previous inspection, as did achievement in 2013.
- Senior leaders evaluate their actions without considering their impact.
- Governors do not have enough information to challenge and are too ready to accept without question the information they are given. Their impact on the improvement of the academy has been weak.
- On occasions, some students bully others and the school's work to reduce bullying has not been successful.
- Attendance is falling and systems to check on absence are not done soon enough.
- The principal and governors have not ensured that staff feel valued and supported.
- Achievement requires improvement because gaps still exist in the progress of different groups of students, although they are closing rapidly this year.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders in charge of teaching, including subject leaders, have improved the quality of teaching, especially in key subjects such as English and progress for the majority of students is improving as a result.
- The sixth form is good. Effective leadership has ensured the quality of teaching and the good outcomes for students have been sustained. Sixth form students are good role models for younger students.
- The vast majority of students are generally courteous and helpful, and the atmosphere around the academy is calm and purposeful. Relationships between teachers and students, and between students of different ages are usually good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out in response to a number of complaints made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that the academy's next full inspection should be brought forward to follow up the whole school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether:
 - students in the academy are safe and free from bullying
 - safeguarding procedures are adequate
 - leaders and governors are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for safeguarding within the academy.
- Inspectors observed 25 lessons. There were no Year 11 or sixth form lessons taking place during the inspection due to study leave for these students. However, inspectors were able to talk to some of these pupils as they returned to sit examinations. Inspectors also made short visits to tutor sessions and observed behaviour outside of lessons.
- Students' work in lessons and in books was scrutinised.
- Inspectors analysed a wide range of documentation provided by the academy, including minutes of meetings, policy documents and self-evaluation records.
- A thorough scrutiny of safeguarding and health and safety arrangements was carried out.
- Records of attendance, behaviour and safety were examined.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, and other staff. They spoke to the drivers of the school buses. Inspectors met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with the governor who leads the safeguarding committee. They also held phone conversations with representatives of Cambridgeshire Local Authority.
- The views of students were taken into account through formal meetings with a representative sample across all groups of students. The inspectors also had informal discussions, which were held at the start of the first day of the inspection, during break and lunchtime, in lessons and during the tutor sessions on the second day.
- The views of 73 staff were considered through the staff questionnaire. The views of parents came to inspectors through the online questionnaire, Parent View, to which there were 100 responses by the end of the inspection. The school also provided evidence of positive emails they had received from parents and visitors to the academy.

Inspection team

Elaine Taylor, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Asyia Kazmi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jason Howard	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cathryn Richards	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Pentlow	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, 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

- Sawtry Community College is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form.
- It is an academy which specialises in mathematics and computing.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- There are fewer students with a statement of special educational needs or who are supported at school action plus than usually found in secondary schools. The proportion supported at school action is average.
- The group of students who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and children who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is much smaller than average.
- The academy does not make use of early entry for GCSE examinations. A few students are educated for part or all of the time in alternative provision. This is provided by Huntingdon Regional College, Peterborough City College, Alternative Curriculum Education (ACE), Huntingdon Learning Base and Cambridge Regional College.
- The academy meets the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently ensure all safeguarding and health and safety requirements are fully met.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring self-evaluation is firmly based on the impact of actions taken by all leaders on the quality of provision, outcomes and leadership
 - ensuring the governing body is effective in meeting its statutory duties
 - ensuring all members of the governing body are given training to support them in questioning and challenging the judgements of senior leaders and in using a wide range of evidence in order to be convinced of the academy's effectiveness
 - ensuring senior leaders have robust procedures in place to track and evaluate the support provided for students who need additional support
 - improving staff morale and ensuring that they all feel fully supported in all aspects of their work.
- Raise overall achievement by:
 - embedding the systems for setting targets for students and tracking their progress towards those targets
 - ensuring the remaining gaps between the achievement of different groups in the academy close.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - extending to all subjects the good practice that has successfully raised achievement in English, mathematics and science
 - improving teachers' skills in questioning students so that all make good progress in lessons
 - developing teachers' skills in communicating what students will learn so they better understand the aims and purpose of each activity
 - ensuring teachers provide sufficient challenge for students in their work
 - ensuring the good practice that has developed in marking in some subject areas becomes standard practice across the academy.
- Improve the behaviour and safety of students by:

- improving the systems for recording and monitoring the progress and welfare of vulnerable students
- providing all staff with the help they need to apply the behaviour policy consistently, including reporting incidents
- sharpening the work on preventing bullying so that students not only understand the issues, but also how to deal with the effects and all students are confident that by reporting bullying incidents these will be tackled
- improving attendance, including the systems for alerting parents when children are absent.

An external review of governance and the academy's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The achievement of students requires improvement because some gaps between different groups of pupils remain, although they have closed rapidly this year.
- Girls generally attain higher standards than boys. The academy is aware of this and is taking effective action to ensure boys achieve higher standards and make the same good progress as the girls.
- The proportion of students gaining the top grades in GCSE examinations is below average because some of the more able students do not reach the high levels of which they are capable. Leaders are aware and have firm plans in place which are quickly remedying the situation.
- Students supported at school action and school action plus have made slower progress over time than others. However, school data shows that their progress is now much better and gaps for these students are closing. Students with a statement of educational needs make good progress.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium have made slower progress over time than others and are currently half a grade behind their peers when they finish Year 11. This gap is also closing at a more rapid pace due to careful use of additional funding, including that provided for Year 7 to catch up.
- The achievement of students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is an additional language is in line with that of others in the academy.
- Students who spend some or all of their time in alternative provision are supported well to remain in education. Their progress in GCSE courses is weaker than others, but the vast majority go on to college courses or other further education or training.
- Standards dropped in GCSE examinations in 2013, but have risen again and convincing data shows that students are attaining at higher levels than recently.
- Standards are consistently high in some subjects, for example, science and history, and the specialist subjects of mathematics and information and communication technology.
- The majority of students from all groups now make good progress in mathematics and English. The focus on improving teaching in English, supported by good support for literacy in all subjects has successfully addressed the weaker progress identified at the last inspection.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form and achieve the grades they need in A-level examinations to fulfil their ambitions to attend university or college. Those who have missed grade C in mathematics or English at GCSE are successfully supported so that all have both of these important qualifications by the time they leave.
- Literacy is supported well in a wide range of subjects. Students read regularly, encouraged by the English department's policy of starting lessons with silent reading.
- The majority of students work hard and apply themselves well in lessons. They understand what they need to do to improve and are keen to do so. This enables them to make progress that is increasingly good across a range of subjects.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Students experience a better, more consistent quality of teaching across all subjects than at the time of the last inspection. However, this has still not ensured that all groups of students make good progress.
- The reasons for the differing rates of progress include:
 - variability in the way teachers provide sufficient challenge for more able students
 - teachers not always ensuring that students understand the specific aim of that lesson or activity and how it will contribute to their progress towards the subject's wider aims.
- Teachers generally check how well students have understood and feed back to them on their progress, but in lessons some of the question and answer sessions slow the pace of learning. This is because teachers are not always skilled in ensuring students listen or in providing opportunities for them to explain or summarise what their classmates have said.
- The academy has begun to gather, analyse and monitor the progress students are making more regularly and rigorously. This information is used to communicate higher expectations or to give additional support where it is most needed. As a result, progress has increased this year. This is not yet fully embedded in the work of all leaders, teachers or pastoral staff.
- Lessons start promptly, have interesting activities and are structured around regular routines. This ensures good engagement and positive relationships.
- Examples of very effective teaching were seen in a number of lessons. The progress students had made throughout an art project was outstanding and the work made an exceptional contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students were encouraged to view art as a means to challenge pre-conceptions. An English lesson included an activity that encouraged students to consider their own and their classmates' daydreams as a precursor to examining imagery in a poem. This ensured they were more selective when choosing examples and more thoughtful of the impact on the reader.
- Teaching assistants provide some good support in lessons where there is good communication with teachers. Communication before lessons by email ensures they understand the purpose of the lesson, but too few opportunities are provided for joint planning of the activities. Some teachers are too ready to rely on the teaching assistants during the lesson.
- The quality of marking varies. Some good examples were seen of both helpful developmental comments and a response to them from the students. This practice is not yet sufficiently embedded across the academy.
- Homework is set regularly, but some students complained that not all teachers mark or acknowledge what has been done. The school website has a helpful record of what has been set, but its effectiveness is limited because it is not complete.
- Although no sixth form teaching was seen, students confirmed that the level of challenge is appropriate and that they enjoy their lessons. Their good achievement supports this assertion. Their only complaint is over the quality and size of the dedicated space for private study.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The safety of students is inadequate because some statutory requirements are not met. This includes the recording of the personal details of all adults who come into contact with students in the academy in a single central register does not meet statutory requirements.
- Attendance is declining. The academy does not follow up on absence quickly enough by alerting parents accordingly.
- There is no systematic analysis by senior leaders of the provision for and progress of students who need additional support. Clear systems are not in place to ensure that the welfare of all students is monitored effectively, as the keeping of records is not uniform. Although middle leaders appear to know their pupils well, there is no clarity about how this information is brought together by senior leaders in a systematic, regular way to check on vulnerable pupils.
- Coordination between the school and external agencies is weak resulting in a lack of rigour in monitoring and recording how children are doing. This can prevent students who need the most help from getting it quickly. Examples included records that had not been updated since primary school and non-attendance that had been insufficiently investigated.
- The academy is aware of a number of health and safety regulations that do not meet statutory requirements, but the principal and governing body have been slow in providing a solution.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is inadequate. However, most students say they feel safe and parents raise no concerns in Ofsted's online survey.
- Students reported that some bullying does happen and that it is not dealt with systematically or consistently. The students are aware of different types of bullying and of the systems in place to deal with incidents, but are not adequately helped to deal with it if they have been victims. While many students felt confident in telling teachers about bullying, a few reported they felt nothing would change by informing teachers. As a result, the principal and senior leaders do not have an accurate understanding of how much and what type of bullying occurs.
- The academy provided a number of examples of positive responses from parents to the support their children had received and the good communication with pastoral leaders, subject leaders and senior leaders in charge of teaching and pastoral care.
- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Although the number of students excluded from the academy is low, the number removed from lessons to work in isolation is relatively high. The work they do when isolated is productive and appropriate, but some staff feel that it is not enough of a deterrent to prevent re-offending. Staff think that some senior leaders do not support them sufficiently to deal with persistent offenders.
- Some successful work has been undertaken by the head of mathematics and computing that has had a very positive impact on behaviour and this is being shared with other departments.
- Students' social development is good. Students are polite to visitors. They adhere to academy rules on dress and punctuality. Tutor time is productive and the different year groups mix well together. One student described these sessions as 'joyful'. The atmosphere around the academy is calm and orderly.
- Relationships at all levels are positive with examples of great care being taken by older students

for younger ones. For example, a parent wrote thanking the academy for the positive experience her primary aged child had had at an induction day for Year 6. Sixth form students are good role models for the younger ones and their attendance is high.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The principal has not established robust systems which enable him to be aware of concerns that staff have about pupils or what staff are doing to address these concerns. This means that neither he nor the governing body can be confident every student is getting the support they need. It also means they are not in a position to evaluate whether this support is making a difference or should be amended.
- Self-evaluation is generous in its judgement on leadership, because it fails to take sufficient account of the impact of the actions taken by leaders on students' achievement, behaviour and safety. This results in plans which do not prioritise the development of rigorous systems to promote the safety and good behaviour of all students. Achievement declined in recent years as did attendance.
- The challenge and support for teachers is helping to secure improvements, but staff morale is low. The staff survey indicated that only 40% of those who replied feel the academy is well led. Many comments were made regarding the lack of visibility of the principal around the academy. Staff feel that too much is left to one or two members of the senior team to do. Parental responses to the online survey provide a similar lack of confidence in leadership, with a third disagreeing that the academy is well led and 14% who said they did not know. One third of the respondents would not recommend the academy to another parent.
- Leaders are improving their work to promote equality because some groups who do not achieve as well as they could are making better progress this year.
- Some key leaders and managers are working effectively. This includes subject leaders and senior leaders who are responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching. As a result, teaching is improving and although some gaps remain, progress for most students is accelerating. Good practice in the system for staff to observe each other is leading to better sharing of effective teaching strategies.
- Heads of the pastoral 'zones' are knowledgeable about the credits and sanctions given to their students by other staff. Some have set up effective systems to identify concerns, record absences and interventions. However, this is not done in a consistent way across different zones and therefore analysis across the school is not possible. This means patterns and issues cannot be identified or addressed in a coherent way.
- Professional development is linked to performance management objectives, which are linked to demanding public examination targets. Assessment of performance takes account of a range of evidence, including lesson observations and students' progress. As a result, performance management systems are effective.
- The curriculum provides a range of academic and vocational courses that adequately meet the needs of students. The curriculum is reviewed regularly and kept up to date. The sixth form curriculum is being extended to include more vocational options. Subject departments have policies that are ensuring literacy is supported well across the curriculum. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, which are compulsory in the sixth form, to ensure students are supported both academically and socially. The provision to support students' spiritual, moral,

social and cultural development requires improvement in aspects of social development.

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. The good achievement identified at the last inspection has continued. The number of students in the sixth form is rising and more students are applying to join the sixth form from outside the academy. The curriculum in the sixth form has a number of options and students receive good advice as to the right courses for them. As a result, the numbers that successfully finish their courses is very high. Personal support from the sixth form administrator is highly valued by the students. The leader of the sixth form is responsible for the risk assessment of trips and off-site visits for the whole academy and this work is thorough and very well organised.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers unless it can be demonstrated that they will be working in one of the strong departments with good leadership such as mathematics, science, history and physical education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have failed to ensure that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.
 - Governors do not systematically challenge senior leaders and do not hold the academy to account for students' achievement, the quality of teaching and the effective and efficient deployment of resources. As a result they have failed to secure improvements in the effectiveness of the academy.
 - There is evidence that senior leaders provide information about many aspects of the academy's work, but do not make it clear to governors how that evidence has been scrutinised. Too much evidence is taken on trust without corroboration.
 - Governors do not have a thorough and detailed understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and not all governors have been provided with the training they need in order to challenge effectively.

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	136974
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	442086

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1296
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Leaton
Principal	James Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	06 February 2013
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