

Sandwell Community School

Westminster Road, West Bromwich, B71 2JN

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The senior leadership team has quickly and effectively reorganised the school to make sure that all students receive a good education.
- The senior leadership team are successfully managing improvements in teaching and learning.
- The executive headteacher, senior leadership team and governing body have created a shared and focused vision for improvement.
- All staff, feeder schools, the local authority parents and students have a full and agreed understanding of the purpose of the school.
- Good teaching across the whole school has re-engaged students in learning and, as a result, progress rates are rising.
- Regardless of their starting points, students make good progress in English, mathematics and science.
- Due to positive relationships with staff, students' behaviour is good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is positive.
- Parents are pleased with their children's progress and the support of staff; they rightly feel the school is a safe environment.
- The school offers a wide range of academic, vocational and work-related learning opportunities to support its core provision of English, mathematics and science.
- The governing body has structured itself well and uses the expertise of its members to be highly challenging and supportive of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not a consistent approach to the collection, analysis and presentation of information on students' progress. This results in teachers occasionally being unsure about students' skills and knowledge.
- The attendance of some of the hard-to-reach students is too low.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 26 lessons over all five sites, a number of which were joint observations with different members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with members of the senior leadership team, groups of students, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, two parents, a representative from the school’s support agencies, a representative from the local police force, and a representative from one of the high schools the school serves. A telephone conversation took place with an external provider.
- There were no responses to Parent View, the online parent questionnaire.
- The inspection team scrutinised students work, the information the school holds regarding the progress students make, the leadership and management teams’ self-evaluation and school development documentation and the policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Taylor	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sandwell Community School was formed in April 2013 by the amalgamation of five different pupil referral units spread out across Sandwell. Some of the units stand alone on their own sites and others are based on the sites of local high schools.
- Sandwell Community School is a Key Stages 3 and 4 pupil referral unit which caters for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. An increasing number of students also have other barriers to learning.
- Students have either been permanently excluded or are at risk of exclusion from their mainstream schools.
- Some students have a statement of special educational needs, but many do not.
- The school population is predominantly of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority, is above average.
- The school makes use of work and vocational opportunities at Start Right in Smethwick, Groundworks in Sandwell and The Prince's Trust Group in Sandwell.
- The school provides support for a number of schools, parents and other agencies in relation to students with more complex needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement across the school by:
 - ensuring that all leaders and managers within the school have a consistent approach to data collection, analysis and presentation to ensure teachers have a good understanding of their students' abilities.
- Improve attendance across all the units, particularly for the hard-to-reach students, by:
 - developing and implementing a common approach to managing attendance
 - promoting positive attitudes to engaging in and enjoying learning
 - rapidly instigating the proposed computer-based learning programmes of study
 - ensuring that the students' involvement in these programmes is well monitored and tracked.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The vast majority of the students enter the school having had long-term disruption to their education. Many have skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. The staff work effectively with their feeder high schools to create a clear baseline from which the students can be developed. This in turn results in generally well-constructed, individualised programmes of study in which students thrive.
- All students, regardless of their background, gender or ethnicity make good progress in mathematics, English and science. Students also make good progress in other subjects such as art, history and physical, health, social and emotional studies. Work in books and around the various sites all show that progress over time has been good and is improving. Students' art work seen in several of the units is of a particularly high standard.
- The highly positive relationships created between staff and students enables the students to quickly improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Progress in developing students' social skills is rapid. This was clearly seen during the short breaks the students have, in which they took part in a variety of activities with respect and courteous consideration towards each other and the staff supervising them.
- The improvements in behaviour have led to an increasing number of students catching up in their achievement to the point that many now return to mainstream schools within two or three terms of being placed in the school. This success was shown in the response of a high school representative who stated: 'Not only have exclusions in our school dropped but students return to us without re-offending. They settle back into their lessons effectively and enjoy school.'
- The school makes good use of a range of external provision for its oldest students. Here students thrive still further, gaining qualifications in mechanics, construction and a range of vocational programmes. One of these providers was quick to explain to a member of the inspection team just how well the students settled into and persevered with their courses: 'They want to learn, to succeed and have very positive attitudes.'
- Students who receive extra support through the pupil premium make good progress in line with that of their peers in the school. Many leave school with skills and knowledge in English and mathematics approximately half a term above that of their peers. The school focuses spending on one-to-one support and developing individualised programmes, which make use of a wide range of learning opportunities, such as outdoor pursuit activities, to build confidence and self-esteem.
- Staff ensure that skills in reading, writing and spelling are an integral part of the students' learning. Besides being taught in direct English lessons, these skills are carefully woven into all subjects and this has led to rapid progress in the students' abilities in these areas. In a science lesson, the teacher began with a written element which effectively developed the students' understanding of the subject language, the spellings of key words and phrases used.
- Mathematical skills are also taught both directly and within other lessons. Students are encouraged to and happily participate in their own self-assessment of their work and behaviour. In turn, students know how well they are progressing and what to do to improve further. Students say they can progress at a faster rate in mathematics because staff explain their next steps in learning well.

- Although teachers generally use students' progress information well, this is not consistent and so teachers occasionally find it difficult to fully gauge the skills and knowledge their students possess.

The quality of teaching is good

- The senior leadership team have worked with the local authority, its feeder high schools and external consultants to raise the quality of teaching across the whole school. Parents and students rightly feel that teaching is now typically good. As one parent stated, 'My boy has learnt more here in the last few months than he has done in his whole school life.' A student summed up their views saying, 'The teachers here listen to us, they talk to us and explain things properly.'
- Teachers plan lessons well to make sure that work meets the needs of all students in their lesson. They make sure that resources are appropriate and that lessons are engaging. As one student commented during a mathematics lesson, 'The work is challenging but the staff really explain it well, so we know what we are doing.' Staff take great care to make sure that every student, regardless of their ability, understands and makes appropriate progress.
- Staff constantly encourage students to do their best. This develops their confidence, self-esteem and attitudes towards learning. In a challenging English lesson, students were studying forms of poetry and language structures. Students' responses to the excellent questioning of staff showed that they had rapidly acquired the skills taught. They could relate the work to other aspects of learning and took pride in their success.
- Students make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding as they reflect on the choices they make in life, the consequences of their actions and the effect they may have on others. As the link police officer stated: 'The way in which the staff work with the students and support them in developing their behaviour means that they are less likely to offend. Therefore, we are often able to deal with them through support rather than punishment.'
- The other adults who support learning are fully involved in the assessment of the students' progress throughout all lessons. They provide positive support to the students, through the use of good questioning and discussion skills. In almost all lessons seen these adults encouraged students to rise to the challenges set by the teachers and to do their best.
- Teachers use the information they collect during lessons well to change their lessons to suit the rates of progress the students make and to keep their engagement. This was seen during a science lesson where the students enjoyed the challenges set and the teacher varied the lesson throughout.
- Teachers generally use information on students' progress effectively to plan for future learning. However, as the way this information is presented varies across the school, this occasionally causes concerns for teachers in its interpretation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. There is a consistent approach across the whole school and this has resulted in behaviour improving for all students. Both parents and students rightly feel that behaviour is positive. As one student stated, 'There are still odd times when someone loses their temper but this is rare and staff deal with it well.' A parent stated, 'If it wasn't for the way

the school helped my child improve, we might not have a home now.'

- Students are polite and respectful to both each other and adults. This in turn leads to their positive attitudes in lessons, where students concentrate and persevere in their work. Students show pride in their success and that of others. At the end of one lesson when students discussed their achievement and behaviour, each not only gave an honest view of their contribution but also that of others. All took pride from each other's comments and the success of their peers.
- The school's work to keep the students safe and secure is good. All areas of each site are secure and well maintained. The governing body make sure that each site is safe and they review all risk assessments, safeguarding procedures and policies. Staff are well trained in safeguarding aspects, as are members of the governing body. The senior leadership team work well with the local authority to make sure that their work in this area is robust.
- Students and parents rightly feel the school is a safe place to be. Students feel that staff keep them safe and always want the best for them. This is clearly shown by the care taken to make sure that external provision is also safe. The school carries out its own checks, draws up risk assessments and carefully monitors students' attendance and progress.
- Students have a good understanding of the various forms of bullying and say that it does not happen in the school. They understand how to stay safe on the internet and state there are no issues in the school regarding race, culture or homophobic behaviour. One student summed this up effectively when they said: 'Here we are all the same. It doesn't matter if you're gay or anything else and all staff respect that and no one pushes their views.'
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe both in and out of school. They are more responsive to alternative choices and understand what a criminal record may do for their future lives. Therefore, students are increasingly being positive citizens.
- As students' behaviour has improved, the number of exclusions has reduced. However, in two units there was a short period where a number of exclusions occurred during a period of turnover in staffing. The senior leadership team reacted quickly and this rectified the situation.
- Attendance is rising and the average increase in attendance has been between 25% and 45%. However, attendance is still not high enough for the hard-to-reach students in some units. The school is in the process of initiating a computer-based learning programme. This will provide an alternative form of learning for those students who are school phobic and struggle in any form of school environment. It will also ensure the school can track students' participation in learning.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the school was created in April 2013 the senior leadership team has worked hard to unite all the units into an effective single school. They have rigorously monitored teaching and the progress of students. The fact that the behaviour policy is consistent across all the units has helped reduce behavioural issues.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have high expectations and aspirations for the students. All staff share a common desire to improve. Positive external support from the local authority and feeder high schools has helped the senior leadership team to moderate and develop the work of the school. They use this support to moderate their initial assessments of the students and ongoing assessments during their stay.

- The executive headteacher and governing body have created an effective interim management structure and are moving to a model based on the lines of a mainstream school. All areas of the school are improving effectively, but the senior leadership team are aware of the need to accelerate this process.
- The senior leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school based on evidence collected by all the heads of the units. This means self-evaluation is accurate and the school improvement plan is well constructed. The senior leadership team have introduced further training for all staff in order to make sure the students receive the best teaching possible.
- The school goes out of its way to ensure that everyone who learns and works in the school has an equal opportunity to achieve at their very best. Performance management systems are used effectively to both raise the quality of teachers' performance and their personal development. They are also used to eliminate any underperformance of teaching. Students are provided with every opportunity to achieve in a wide range of learning and social opportunities.
- The senior leadership team allocate pupil premium funding effectively. It provides one to one support for a number of students and support for families. A range of resources have been purchased to make sure all the students' needs are fully met. This has resulted in these students making progress at least in line with their peers in school. They leave the school with skills and knowledge approximately a term above their peers.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and these are closely linked to the school's behaviour policy and procedures. Linked to these elements are a wide range of specialist agencies, the police, medical specialists and the high schools the school serves. This provides a 'wrap-around approach' to all the work the school does to ensure that students leave the school with the best possible life chances.
- The executive headteacher and governing body have ensured that most policies and procedures are consistent across the whole school. However, the senior leadership team are aware that the inconsistency of approach in the collection and interpretation of information regarding students' progress could be improved.
- The local authority provides good support to the school and supports all aspects of its development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has created a robust structure and is using the strengths of its members very effectively to both challenge and support the school. They know the school very well based on evidence from their visits. Governors moved quickly to make sure there is a common behaviour policy across the school. They have assisted the headteacher in creating a management structure modelled on a mainstream school. Members of the governing body have attended appropriate training to help them hold the school to account for all aspects of its performance. The governing body carry out their safeguarding duties effectively and check that statutory requirements are met. Members know how well the students are doing in all aspects of their learning. They are aware that there is a need to bring about a greater continuity of collection, analysis and presentation of students' progress. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and make sure that teachers' pay and professional development is closely linked to students' progress.

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	135254
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	428916

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Jones
Executive Headteacher	Graham Angell
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2011
Telephone number	0121 556 4951
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