

Sowerby Bridge High School

Albert Road, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire, HX6 2NW

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement requires improvement; students do not make rapid enough progress through the school and standards at GCSE level are not high enough.
- The achievement of the most-able students requires improvement, particularly in English.
- Teaching has not enabled all students to excel in all subjects. High expectations of students are not always evident from teachers.
- Marking does not always allow students to understand clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Students sometimes repeat earlier learning instead of building on it and this slows their progress in securing gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Persistent absence is still too high and this sporadic attendance stops a few students making the progress they should.
- It is too soon to judge whether new governance and the challenge governors now bring are leading to more positive outcomes for students.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the last inspection, leaders at all levels, managers and governors have worked tirelessly to improve teaching and outcomes for students. Rates of progress are increasing for most groups of learners, particularly in science.
- The behaviour of students is good. They are punctual to lessons and equipped for their lessons. They feel safe in school.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in this multicultural and diverse school community is strong. It supports integration well and demonstrates a high regard for fundamental British values, such as the rule of law and democratic principles.
- Support for literacy and students' ability to access all areas of the curriculum are good. These ensure equality of opportunity for all.
- The progress learners make overall across subjects, especially in English and mathematics, is improving due to improved teaching and timely interventions.
- The widening of the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers up to 2013 has now reversed and the progress these students make is increasing.
- Students with special educational needs do well and they receive good support.
- The sixth form is good. This provision is highly regarded by students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part-lessons across the school, including four observed jointly with senior leaders. The 'period 6' tutor time was also observed to ascertain its impact on supporting students' moral values.
- Formal discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders, three groups of students, two parents and a representative of the local authority.
- Additional informal discussions were held with students in lessons and in the yard and canteen at break times.
- Scrutiny of students' work was carried out during lesson observations and also as a separate exercise in English, mathematics and science to ascertain the current progress students make and trends of progress over time.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included those relating to the performance of staff, leaders' view of the progress students make over time, safeguarding and child protection, minutes of meetings of the governing body and those relating to school leaders' own views of more recent improvement and plans for future progress.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons, at break times and in the school canteen. They also looked at the school's inclusion policies and procedures and the impact of the internal inclusion unit for vulnerable students called 'Streetwise'.
- Further scrutiny was carried out within the school-hosted hearing-impaired unit and autistic spectrum disorder unit.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff. There were not enough responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to enable them to be analysed. Results from the school's own survey carried out with parents were considered.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Frank Cain	Additional Inspector
David Woodhouse	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sowerby Bridge High School is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for support from the pupil premium funding is over twice the national average and accounts for more than half of the school population.
- The school makes limited use of alternative provision for a few of its students. This is offered through Calderdale College and the Himmat Project in Halifax.
- The school is being further supported for progress in English by the local Trinity Academy to enhance teaching and increase students' progress in the subject.
- Most students are from minority ethnic groups and the majority speaks English as an additional language. Almost 20% of students are of Romany or Gypsy heritage.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school hosts and manages the local authority's provision for those students with a hearing impairment and for students who require support with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching so that the progress learners make is accelerated and sustained across all subjects and reaches national expectations, particularly in English and mathematics, and overall standards improve by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently set high expectations of their students, especially the most-able students
 - providing students with work that always challenges, motivates, excites and inspires them to do their very best at all times
 - building on students' prior learning, so that they are able to secure and deepen their understanding of concepts, and their knowledge and their skills
 - supporting teaching assistants to develop their own subject knowledge, so that they give successful direction and help to learners at all times
 - consolidating recent improvements in the progress students make as a result of the school's marking policy and ensuring that teachers across all subject areas follow it consistently, as in science.
- Consolidate and improve upon the recent gains in students' attendance and secure a large reduction in the rates of persistent absence, so that all learners attend and enjoy school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, leaders at all levels have worked tirelessly to improve the outcomes for all learners. As a result, teaching is improving and the progress students make in their studies is increasing. However, it is too early to see improvement through examination results at GCSE.
- Leaders have successfully tackled overall absence levels, so that these are now near to the national average and continue to improve. However, persistent absence rates, despite reducing, are still too high.
- Leadership of teaching is good. Teachers speak highly of the senior leaders and of the support they receive to improve their skills and to get the best out of their students. Support for those new to the profession and new to the school is good.
- Middle leaders share the ambitions of senior leaders and governors well and they are effective in their roles. They want success for their subjects and for students to do well. They are proud of their school, have good knowledge of the performance of teachers in their subjects and are astute in knowing the challenges that remain.
- The leadership of both the hearing-impaired and autistic spectrum disorder units is good and increases significantly the happiness and progress of students who attend these provisions. Leadership of teachers and other staff to support those students with special educational needs is also good.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good, leading to strong outcomes for learners, both in their studies and in their development into adulthood. Information, advice and guidance offered to students going into the sixth form, and throughout their time in the sixth form, are good.
- Procedures to support good behaviour in the classroom and around school are beginning to have a major impact on reducing the use of exclusions. The leadership of 'Streetwise', the school's internal inclusion unit, is supporting the needs of learners and the management of their behaviour well.
- Leaders at all levels believe firmly in the nurturing ethos of the school. Parents who met with inspectors were clear in their support of this ethos and of the care, guidance and support for their children provided by teachers and school leaders.
- Both the attendance and progress of students from the large minority who are of Romany or Gypsy heritage are similar to those seen nationally. Teachers and leaders work hard to integrate all minority ethnic groups successfully into a cohesive union of learners.
- The work of leaders is successfully promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- Students who attend alternative provision facilities are looked after well, attend well and make expected progress in their studies. Leaders check on the progress of these students and have a clear overview of the students' attendance and behaviour. School leaders offer quickly any support required.
- Students who are learning to speak English as an additional language are supported well, so that they are able to join in lessons successfully.
- Although there was a widening of the gap between the progress of disadvantaged students and their peers up to the 2013 GCSE examinations, this has now narrowed due to the positive impact of pupil premium spending and resultant interventions and support.
- Targeted support for the weakest readers, supported through the government Year 7 catch-up funding, is supporting those students well to improve their reading skills. At the beginning of Year 7 last year, only 35% of readers were at their chronological reading age, but this had risen to 49% by the end of the year.
- Gaps in standards between other groups of students, such as those with special educational needs or those from minority ethnic groups, are small and the progress they make is similar to that of their peers in school.
- Leaders are clearly focused on furthering improvement across the whole school. The benefits of the actions already taken are beginning to come through, particularly in the rates of progress students are making in mathematics and English.
- The curriculum offered to students is appropriate and supports their development into young adults, preparing them well for their futures. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good, as is their understanding of British values. Teachers have recently revisited training to support students to tackle extremism and prejudice in all its forms.
- The school provides good advice and guidance to help students make informed choices about their next steps.
- The local authority is helping to provide and broker support for governors at the school. School leaders work well in partnership with other local secondary schools, a process supported by the local authority, to

drive improvement forward and this is helping them in their goal for Sowerby Bridge High School to become a good school.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors, led by a newly elected and highly motivated Chair, are determined and driven to improve the school's performance. They recognise the challenges that remain. They acknowledge that despite recent gains in the progress learners at all levels make, this has not been good enough or resulted in sustained improvements in attainment or progress.
- Leaders work hard to fill vacant places on the governing body. Governors are well-supported by the local authority, receive good training and know their roles well.
- Governors understand the data provided to them by school leaders and those available on public websites. They are able to use this information well to challenge leaders and staff about students' progress and to support performance management.
- Governors are aware of the strengths in teaching and how teachers affect positive outcomes for students. Progression through the pay scale is not automatic and teachers know their targets well.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students speak highly of the school and of their peers. All integrate well and low-level disruption to lessons is rare.
- Systems to record bullying are in place and ensure that leaders can detect any emerging patterns of poor behaviour.
- Students are well dressed, punctual to their lessons and equipped ready to work.
- Students' attitudes to learning are generally very positive. However, on occasion, their excitement to participate in learning is hindered by tasks that either repeat what they already know or which fail to inspire them due to the relevance of the activities.
- Students are confident and appear happy in school. In lessons, they work well together and support each other's learning effectively.
- Relationships between staff and students are caring and help to nurture a mutual respect and good working environment.
- Litter around the school is minimal, although during break times there was evidence of some litter being dropped. However, this is quickly picked up so that after meal times, the school is clean. Graffiti is non-existent.
- Incidents of bullying are recorded well by leaders and actions to support good behaviour are prompt and effective. All incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. While inspectors found no evidence of inherent racism or homophobia, leaders are working hard to ensure that students are aware of different cultures, beliefs and backgrounds. During the inspection, all groups of students observed worked well together and integrated impeccably.
- Some students say that they do hear negative use of language when some students call other students names, but leaders and teachers do consistently tackle inappropriate use of language.
- There are many opportunities for students to learn about different sections of society. Guest speakers from different community backgrounds enhance students' understanding of cultures from this country and around the world.
- Systems to manage students' behaviour are firmly established throughout the school. Teachers use the established procedures to manage students' behaviour well and to support students' understanding of their expected behaviour. The school's own inclusion unit, 'Streetwise', is helping learners to understand how to behave well and is helping to reduce the rate of exclusion.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Procedures to ensure that students are safe in school, for example in practical lessons and while using modern online technologies, are supporting their understanding of how to be safe. Students say that they feel safe. Students who attend off-site provision are also safe, with secure procedures in place to ensure this.
- Procedures to check the credentials of staff are securely in place and appropriate.
- Students know where to get help when they have a problem. Teachers and leaders at all levels show great care for their students and do their best to keep them happy in school.

- Leaders have succeeded in increasing attendance of all groups of students. The attendance of those of Romany or Gypsy heritage is lower than that of other groups of students in school, but similar to that of their peers nationally.
- Persistent absence, although reducing slowly, is still too high. A recently appointed attendance officer is making good initial strides in reducing this figure.
- The attendance of students who participate in alternative provision for their education equals that of their peers in the main school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving overall and across all subjects within the school. However, it requires improvement because it does not result in sufficiently good outcomes for students in terms of the results they gain in GCSE examinations or the progress they make over time. Teachers' expectations of students, particularly the most able, are not always high enough.
- The most-able students do not always make the progress they should in lessons, particularly in English, and they do not always reach the highest possible grades which they have the potential to achieve. This is because occasionally the challenge in lessons is not enough to ensure that they make the best possible progress.
- The school's new marking policy is increasing the progress students make, especially in science. However, it is not consistently applied by all staff across subjects and this is hindering faster gains in learning by students.
- Students are able to carry out a task or a particular requirement of a course, but do not always fully understand what they have done or why the skill learnt might be useful.
- Sometimes, students repeat previous learning. For instance, in religious education, a student told the teacher that he had 'already learned this in primary school'. As a result, students' acquisition of new knowledge and the depth of their learning are hindered.
- Teachers' questioning is generally good and helps to support students' acquisition of knowledge. However, sometimes students' answers are accepted too quickly. They are not always followed up with further questioning or development to help the students securely understand the concept or skills they are learning.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well in the classroom. As a result, the support for students who are learning English as an additional language, or students with special educational needs, is good. The subject knowledge of teaching assistants does not always support their work to help learners acquire new skills or knowledge. This was evident in an information technology lesson where a teaching assistant was not able to help a student successfully as a result of the teacher not preparing the assistant well enough to help with the lesson's content.
- Teaching is beginning to impact positively on learning in literacy, reading and mathematics. The support for literacy across the school is good. Pupils have multiple opportunities to read in and outside of lessons and numeracy is supported well by many subjects.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and helps students to develop their skills, particularly in vocational studies, so that they make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2013 the standards reached by students continued to improve, so that 49% of students reached five or more good passes in their GCSE examinations. However, unvalidated data suggest that in the 2014 GCSE examinations, this reduced to 46%. This was due in part to the lower attainment on entry into Year 7 of that year group.
- Students are beginning to make the rates of progress they should by the time they reach Year 11. This is because the quality of teaching is improving. For example, in the 2014 GCSE examinations, unvalidated data indicate that the expected progress of learners in both English and mathematics was close to the levels reached by their peers nationally. However, the proportion of those who made better than expected progress dropped slightly in English, despite it rising in mathematics.
- The most-able students do not achieve well enough overall, and particularly in English. They are not sufficiently stretched by some of the tasks they tackle and are sometimes not supported well enough.
- In science, students make good progress and standards in this subject are rising. Students benefit, in particular, from the careful guidance they receive from teachers' marking and feedback. This is helping

them to do well.

- Usually, school leaders do not now enter students early for GCSE examinations in English or in mathematics, except in exceptional circumstances. For example, a few most-able students who are clearly ready to take the examination and reach their highest potential grade are considered and put forward. The few most-able students who take examinations early do reach their potential.
- Leaders, supported well by the school's data manager, are acutely aware of the progress students make. Their checks on students' progress identify clearly the actions being taken to address these shortcomings.
- In 2013 GCSE English, the standards of disadvantaged students were over a grade lower than those of their peers in school and almost a grade and a half lower than students nationally. Provisional GCSE English results for disadvantaged students in 2014 improved by almost half a grade, reducing the gap between these students' results and those of other students, both in school and nationally, to half a grade and one grade respectively.
- In 2013 GCSE mathematics, the standards of disadvantaged students were lower than those of their peers in the school by almost a grade and a half and almost two grades lower than other students nationally. In 2014, standards in mathematics for disadvantaged students in the school improved by about half a grade, so reducing the gap between these students' results and those of others nationally to one grade and one and a half grades respectively. The gap is narrowing in the rates of progress of disadvantaged students in the school, when compared to the progress of other students nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make the same rates of progress as their peers. Any gaps in the standards being reached are narrowing over time. Those students who access provision in the hearing-impaired unit or the autistic spectrum disorder unit are also supported well and make similar progress to that of others in the school.
- Students who attend off-site provision receive an appropriate and exciting curriculum that helps them to make expected progress overall, such as the support given at Calderdale College.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students enter the sixth form with standards below average and leave with standards close to, and sometimes above, national averages. This is particularly the case for vocational subjects, which are studied by the majority of learners. As a result, the progress of students in the sixth form is good. The numbers who take academic courses are low and the progress these students make is similar to national averages.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and is securing improvements more effectively, both in teaching and in the rates of progress students make, than in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is sometimes variability in the quality of teaching, however, which at times reduces students' achievement, particularly in academic subjects.
- The progress made by different groups of learners, such as disadvantaged students, is similar to that of their peers in school and any gaps are negligible.
- Students say that they are given good guidance when joining the sixth form. The curriculum offered is mostly vocational in nature, but there are some opportunities for academic provision, for example in English and mathematics. Those students whose needs are more academic are guided well to seek out opportunities available to them across the local authority and, as such, equality of opportunity for all groups of students is good.
- The behaviour of students in the sixth form is exemplary and they are determined to succeed.
- Information, advice and guidance to students in the sixth form prepare students well for their future courses into university or for the world of work. There are now no students not in education, employment or training.

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	107563
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	442180

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	950
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Smith
Headteacher	Kate Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2012
Telephone number	01422 831011
Fax number	01422 835962
Email address	admin@sbhs.co.uk

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