

# Soham Village College

Sand Street, Soham, Ely, CB7 5AA

**Inspection dates** 30 April –1 May 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- By the end of Key Stage 4 lower ability students do not make enough progress from their starting points, especially in mathematics.
- Although improving, achievement across subjects in Key Stage 3 is not yet good.
- Assessments in mathematics are not always accurate enough to be useful.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. This is because planned interventions are not sufficiently targeted to accelerate their progress.
- Recent improvements to the quality of teaching have not had enough time to impact fully on speeding up rates of students' progress.
- A minority of teachers do not plan lessons that engage all students in their learning because tasks are not matched well enough to students' abilities.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is a continuously improving academy. Leaders at all levels, including governors, are highly committed. As a result, they have put in place strong structures of accountability, tracking and monitoring which are securing improvements in standards, behaviour and teaching.
- Achievement in English and science and that of the most-able students is good and improving.
- Leaders' and managers' view of the effectiveness of the academy is accurate and plans for improvement focus on the most important areas for development.
- Systems to promote good behaviour and the safety and welfare of students are exemplary.
- Relationships between staff and students are exceptional and promote positive attitudes to learning.
- Students are well behaved and mix well together. The development of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education prepares students well for life in modern Britain.
- Robust systems for managing performance provide good support to staff. The professional development of staff is closely matched to their needs and those of the academy.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons and additional registration periods and assemblies. Seven lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 249 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, two letters and an email from parents.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and scrutinised information about students’ achievement, including disadvantaged students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs.
- Inspectors looked at the work in students’ books and listened to them read.
- Inspectors examined records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and exclusions. They also looked at documents used by leaders and governors to check and evaluate the academy’s work, to plan its improvement and to keep students safe.
- Inspectors took account of 154 staff responses to an Ofsted inspection questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Jalil Shaikh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul O’Shea	Additional Inspector
Michael Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Vondra Mays	Seconded Inspector
Alan Gray	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Soham Village College is an academy converter school. It is part of the Staploe Educational Trust. The headteacher also serves as an executive headteacher for the other two primary schools in the trust.
- It is a larger than average 11–16 secondary school.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the number of students who speak English as an additional language are much lower than found in other schools nationally.
- The proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and who are supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school receives funding for Year 7 students to catch up on their reading.
- A very small number of students receive provision outside of the academy at the County School, Cambridge Learning Base and at West Suffolk College to study mechanics.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, so that it is at least consistently good, by ensuring all teachers:
  - develop appropriate approaches in the classroom to increase the confidence and skills of disabled students and those who have special educational needs
  - use assessment information available to plan work that matches the abilities of students and in particular those of lower ability.
- Improve the rates of students' progress and raise standards by:
  - thoroughly planning all subjects in Key Stage 3 to ensure students can make consistently good progress
  - ensuring all assessments are accurate and used effectively to plan the students' work, especially in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, are highly committed and ambitious. They have created strong structures of accountability, good levels of support and appropriate arrangements to check on the quality of provision. As a result, they are securing improvements in standards, behaviour and teaching.
- Systems to check on and improve the performance of staff and the quality of teaching are good. While providing good levels of challenge, senior leaders also support staff well. The professional development of staff is closely matched to their individual needs, and those of the academy. External consultants and organisations are used well to support teachers and middle leaders and to check the accuracy of senior leaders' judgements about standards. This is having a good impact on improving the quality of teaching. However, recent improvements have not had enough time to impact fully on speeding up students' progress.
- Leaders' evaluation and improvement plans are accurate and focus well on areas needing improvement. Considerable improvement is already evident. Good progress has been made this year in raising the achievement of disadvantaged students. However, improvement has not been as fast in raising achievement at Key Stage 3, in improving the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs or in ensuring less able students make the progress they should in mathematics.
- Middle leaders work well with senior leaders and governors to improve the quality of teaching and achievement.
- The academy's systems to keep students safe are strong and effective. All staff take their responsibility to keep students safe seriously. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- The academy's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity is confirmed both by the broad and balanced curriculum offered and by leaders' improved systems for the tracking and checking of students' progress at Key Stage 4. These systems allow leaders at all levels to be able to report on the attendance, progress and behaviour of all students, including those at alternative provision. As a result, they have an accurate understanding of where improvements are needed.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education prepares students well for life in modern Britain. Students consistently display high levels of respect and tolerance and have good attitudes to learning in the classroom.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged students at the academy and other students nationally.
- The academy provides good quality careers guidance to its students. This results in a very small number of students not in education, employment or training when they leave at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Parents support the academy well. The academy has made good progress in engaging with parents and carers, some of whom are hard to reach. Attendance at parent consultations is high and those parents who do not attend are followed up individually to ensure that they are kept informed about the progress of their children. Parents are unreservedly positive about the academy's provision for their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is effective. Each governor has the responsibility for a key remit of the academy. They provide both support and challenge for senior managers.  
Governors have a wide range of skills which benefit the academy; they undertake training to enable them to question leaders effectively. As a result, they understand the strengths and areas requiring development of the academy well. Their work is having a significantly positive impact on raising standards.
  - The governors participate in managing the performance of all staff; they reward good teachers and

tackle underperformance. This is having a significant impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning and on the achievement of students.

- The school's budget is managed well. Spending decisions, including the use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, have made a good impact on students' achievement.
- Governors take their responsibility to safeguard students very seriously and these arrangements meet statutory requirements.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This contributes greatly to the excellent relationships students form with each other and with staff. Students display high levels of respect and tolerance which prepare them well for life in modern day multicultural Britain.
- The academy has an effective behaviour policy which students know and accept. This ensures students enjoy attending school. The environment around the academy is a clean, safe and happy one, where students manage their own behaviour independently.
- Students' attitudes to learning are highly positive, even when teaching is not good. They collaborate well in order to exchange ideas, to extend their knowledge and support each other's learning. Low-level disruption in lessons is very rare.
- Students are well behaved in corridors and during break and lunch times. In between lessons students move around in an orderly manner and are punctual. During the inspection students were very polite and courteous and met inspectors with smiles, appropriate greetings and opened doors for them.
- Due to effective checks and intervention, attendance is above average. Persistent absence is also well below that found nationally and continues to reduce. Leaders have secured this position through working closely with parents and by using effective intervention strategies.
- Fixed-term exclusions have been consistently below the national average and continue to decrease as a sanction for poor behaviour.

### **Safety**

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All students spoken to during formal meetings and around the school said they feel safe at the academy and whilst attending alternative provision. This view was also supported by the overwhelming majority of parents.
- The academy carries out good quality risk assessments to keep students safe and provides appropriate supervision. Staff are vigilant and challenge any members of the public who venture unannounced onto the site. This is especially important as the academy's site is divided by a public walkway to a neighbouring primary school.
- Parents, staff and students are very positive about the behaviour and safety around the academy. The academy keeps good records of behaviour-related incidents. These logs indicate incidents are low and are decreasing.
- Bullying and racial incidents are extremely rare. Students understand how the academy protects them from harm and are confident that the academy deals with any reported incidents both quickly and effectively. Students of all ethnicities mix well.

## **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement. It is inconsistent, especially in mathematics. Where teaching is stronger, students' progress is accelerating.
- A minority of teachers do not plan lessons that engage all students in their learning. This is because tasks are not matched closely enough to students' abilities. This results in lower ability-students in particular not making the same progress as others because tasks are sometimes too difficult for them.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers usually dominate the lesson and there is a lack of activities that promote good learning or develop students' skills. This results in learning slowing down as students sit passively and do not contribute to the lesson. Interventions aimed at raising the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs are at times insufficiently closely targeted to meet their learning needs. Although supported well in class by additional adults, tasks given to these students sometimes do not do enough to promote the development of the skills needed to secure consistently good progress.
- Teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well by providing opportunities for collaboration and reflection on moral issues. This has a positive impact on attitudes to learning, on achievement and on students' behaviour.
- Support provided to disadvantaged students and those receiving the Year 7 catch-up funding is having a positive impact on raising overall achievement and levels of literacy and reading. Close monitoring of the progress being made by these students and timely interventions are now having a positive impact on outcomes.
- There are positive relationships between staff and students and well-established routines. This often means students continue to learn even when the quality of teaching is less than good. Many teachers plan activities and tasks very well using information about students' prior learning, to ensure they are appropriately challenged and able to make progress quickly from their individual starting points.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- In Year 7, students enter the academy with attainment levels broadly in line with the national average. Most students, including the most able, make good progress in their learning by the end of Key Stage 4 when they leave the academy. However, over time, by the end of Key Stage 4, lower-ability students do not make enough progress from their starting points, especially in mathematics.
- Achievement in most subjects in Key Stage 3 requires improvement. This is because systems to track and check on students' progress are not as robust or refined as they are in Key Stage 4. Assessments of students' progress in mathematics are not accurate enough to be useful.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is slower than that of other students. This is because planned interventions are not sufficiently targeted in order to accelerate their achievement and do not meet their needs sufficiently well.
- Good systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of students in Key Stage 4 have allowed leaders to identify accurately specific areas of development across all subject areas. This has resulted in effective intervention and improvements to the quality of teaching in most subjects. As a result, the progress made by students is improving strongly but is not consistently good across all subjects and ability ranges.
- As a result of better targeting and support, disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium are now making good progress. Currently their attainment at Key Stage 4 is improving although it is still behind that of other students nationally and in the academy. In 2014, those students supported by the pupil premium attained just over half a grade lower than other students nationally in English and one and a half grades lower in mathematics; these gaps in attainment are closing.
- Attainment and progress in English and science at Key Stage 4 have been well above average over the

past three years and continue to be major strengths of the school. Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to improve literacy levels. This has resulted in most students making good progress in their reading and literacy development at Key Stage 3.

- The most-able students are making good progress. As a result, the percentages of students attaining A\*-A grades in GCSE examinations in most subjects, and especially in English and science, are increasing. The academy's monitoring information indicates this is a result of the more rigorous evaluation of student progress and improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The academy no longer uses early entry for GCSE examinations.
- Students attending alternative provision achieve well. This is because the courses they take are well matched to their individual needs.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136610
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	462127

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1304
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicola Close
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carin Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 May 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01353 724100
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