

Southfield Technology College

Moorclose Road, Workington, Cumbria, CA14 5BH

Inspection dates

10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Teaching requires improvement. Activities and questioning do not always meet students' needs and ability precisely. Marking is variable in impact.
- Achievement requires improvement. Students' progress is patchy as teaching is not yet securing consistently good progress in all classes.
- Students' literacy skills are not promoted systematically. Students do not have enough opportunities to write at length and develop their vocabulary in all subjects.
- Oral and communication skills are not taught well enough to enable students to communicate with aplomb in different contexts.
- Behaviour requires improvement. At times, students do not engage fully in their learning. Some students can be distracted easily and have not developed strategies to persevere with challenging tasks.
- Students have limited opportunities to develop leadership skills and use their initiative.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership at all levels is good. Leaders have eradicated inadequacies, improved teaching and behaviour and raised achievement. There is good capacity to secure further improvement.
- The headteacher provides good leadership. Supported ably by the senior leadership team, she is driving improvements with determination and ensuring students' achievement and well-being are at the heart of the college's work.
- The executive headteacher is leading change and improvement very effectively. Strong partnership working with Stainburn School is ensuring students benefit from staff's skills and expertise at both schools.
- The interim executive board (IEB) provides very effective support to college leaders, through a time of significant change and challenge.
- There is good practice in teaching in the college, providing models for further improvement.
- The college's work to keep students safe is good. Students feel very safe because behaviour around the college has improved and relationships are positive and encouraging.
- The sixth form is good. Staff from Stainburn and Southfield schools pool their expertise effectively to make sure students receive good specialist teaching and achieve well.
- The high level of commitment from all staff to the students they teach is ensuring continuity in learning. Staff and students are looking forward with optimism to the opening of the new academy.

Information about this inspection

- This was a special measures monitoring visit that was deemed a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of subjects and classes. Teaching in every class has been observed during previous monitoring visits. Inspectors conducted a detailed scrutiny of students’ work.
- Meetings were held with leaders at all levels, governors, teachers and students. Inspectors spoke to many students during lessons and breaktimes.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View (the Ofsted online questionnaire for parents) for them to register. Inspectors considered parent surveys and communications conducted by college leaders. The staff questionnaire was not completed but the lead inspector has spoken with the majority of staff to gain their views, at this and previous visits.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including self-evaluation, monitoring information and improvement planning. They analysed data relating to students’ achievement, looked at policies and checked safeguarding systems and procedures to promote students’ well-being.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Southfield College is smaller than most secondary schools.
- The college is due to close at the end of this academic year. Stainburn School is also closing. A new academy will be opened to serve the Workington community.
- Workington sixth form operates from the Southfield site and serves students from Southfield and Stainburn schools and students from other local schools.
- The majority of students are White British. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students or who have special educational needs is well-above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to the school to support students entitled to free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- A small number of students are educated off-site currently at one alternative provider, the West Cumbria Achievement Zone.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership, governance and teaching staff. An interim headteacher and executive headteacher were appointed after the college was placed in special measures. An interim executive board (IEB) has taken over governance.
- Leaders are managing the closure of the two schools and the opening of the new academy through close partnership working and the sharing of staff across both schools.
- The school works in partnership with William Howard School and with National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and Local Leaders of Education (LLEs) through the Cumbria Association of System Leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement further by:
 - using the good practice in the college to promote consistently good and better teaching in all subjects and for all ability groups
 - giving students opportunities to persevere with challenging tasks and produce good quality, longer pieces of writing
 - building on the good practice that exists in the college to make sure questioning, support and activities are matched to students' ability effectively in all classes and deepen their understanding
 - making sure teachers' marking enables students to improve subsequent pieces of work, corrects errors or adds to their understanding consistently.
- Equip students with skills that will enable them to take a more active role in their learning and prepare them for life beyond college by:
 - developing students' vocabulary and their literacy and oral communication skills systematically across different subjects, so they learn to communicate effectively in different contexts, using different techniques
 - extending opportunities for students to develop leadership and enterprise skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have maintained staff morale and students' pride in their college, during a challenging time of change pending the opening of the new academy. Staff are highly committed to the students and are pulling together to ensure there is a supportive atmosphere for learning.
- Students are pleased with the changes that have taken place. One sixth former said, 'teachers have been inspirational this year... even when they had to cope with stress and uncertainty.' Others speak of a 'much better atmosphere' and endorse that 'we feel really safe because teachers care and act quickly.'
- The executive headteacher is leading change very effectively. She is ensuring the skills and expertise of staff from both schools are used to best effect. Leaders are working successfully across both schools to make sure policies and systems are consistently effective.
- The headteacher works tirelessly for the students of Southfield. She drives through improvements with determination, ensuring that students' achievement and well-being are firmly at the heart of any change. The headteacher is supported ably by the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. All share the vision to help students 'to be the best that we can be' and raise their aspirations for the future.
- The college is highly inclusive and leaders do all they can to ensure equality of opportunity. They support the achievement and personal development of all students carefully and teachers provide extra support for individuals. Gaps in achievement between boys and girls and between disadvantaged and other students are closing as a result. Vulnerable students and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively in small groups or individually. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.
- Leaders ensure students in alternative provision attend regularly, behave well, feel safe and achieve as well as possible. Provision is checked to ensure it meets students' needs.
- Middle leaders drive improvement effectively in their areas of responsibility. They feel empowered and their skills have been extended through good quality professional development. Accountability has been tightened so all staff have a clear understanding of expectations for teaching and students' achievement.
- Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of students' achievement based on observations, students' work and thorough systems to track students' progress. Senior leaders support middle leaders very effectively in analysing data and developing their skills in checking the impact of teaching.
- Procedures to manage the performance of teachers are thorough. The deputy headteacher leads appraisals effectively to make sure all staff are set challenging targets and receive support to achieve them.
- The curriculum has been revised to make sure students have continuity and progression in learning across all subjects. There is a suitable focus on GCSE subjects and students receive good advice and guidance about the pathway they choose. The four pathways ensure students can opt for courses that further their aspirations and are suited to their ability. Students receive good information, advice and guidance about courses and careers, so their decisions are well founded.
- Leaders ensure that students are prepared well for the life in modern Britain, through personal development lessons and by reinforcing British values through the ethos of the college. They promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well in all aspects of their work.
- Safeguarding meets all requirements. The most vulnerable students are supported very effectively to develop personal skills and make sure they are safe.
- The local authority acted quickly to support the college when it went into special measures. There were good appointments to the roles of executive headteacher and interim headteacher and an IEB was established. Leaders have made good use of support from other schools, NLEs and LLEs, through the Cumbria Association of System Leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The IEB provides very effective support to college leaders and has supported both Southfield and Stainburn schools through a time of significant change and challenge. The Chair of the IEB is highly committed to ensuring students thrive both in Southfield and in the new academy and is providing continuity as Chair of the new Governing Body.
 - IEB members have a range of relevant skills. They have an in-depth understanding of strengths and priorities for improvement, including in teaching and the performance of different groups of students.
 - The pupil premium is used effectively to broaden the experience and raise the achievement of disadvantaged students. Their achievement has risen significantly as a result of successful support.
 - IEB members manage the performance of the headteacher effectively. They ensure that teachers' performance meets expected standards and that teachers receive increases in salary only when their

performance merits it. They have successfully supported teachers to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The behaviour policy is implemented consistently by staff and respected by students.
- Students are typically well behaved around the college. They are polite, considerate and show respect for each other and their teachers. They look after the environment and keep it litter-free. Students are welcoming, so students who join the college in Year 7, or at other times, settle and make friends quickly.
- Warm relationships between staff and students are conducive to learning and help students to grow in confidence. Students are attentive and cooperative in lessons. Those who attend alternative provision engage in their work successfully.
- There are times, however, when some students are not fully engaged in lessons; they can be distracted by off-task chat or sit back and do not work as hard as they could. Students have limited scope to organise their own learning and are sometimes too reliant on the teacher to guide discussion and keep them focused on activities.
- Teaching is rarely disrupted and removal from lessons due to poor behaviour has reduced significantly. On rare occasions when students are removed, they continue their work in the isolation unit or receive good support in the 'study support' centre if they are struggling.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively in personal development lessons and other subjects and through the ethos of the college. Students are sociable and collaborate well in lessons and around the college. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and a sound understanding of different faiths and cultures.
- Students learn about fundamental British values through various subjects. They demonstrate respect for the law and are aware of how values apply to their own lives in college and beyond.
- Opportunities for students to engage in leadership and enterprise activities have increased, for example through work experience and through students taking on leadership roles in college. However, skills are not taught routinely or as explicitly as they could be to all students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Positive relationships and the fact that students are so well known by teachers help students feel very safe and secure. They know they can talk to staff about any concerns and that staff will act on them.
- Bullying is not a concern for students. They say behaviour has improved immensely because leaders set clear rules and all staff 'stamp out any behaviour that could harm or upset others quickly'. They are aware of the harmful effects of name-calling, including the use of homophobic and racist language or comments about appearance. They distinguish between bullying and falling-out and would not hesitate to report bullying of any sort to teachers.
- The safety and well-being of students is a high priority for all staff. Students are taught how to keep themselves safe from risks such as extremism, gang culture, crime, drugs and alcohol. They have a full understanding of risks associated with social media and internet use.
- Attendance has improved and is now close to average for all student groups. Persistent absenteeism by a few students is followed up with support to families.
- Improvements in behaviour are reflected in the fact that fixed-term exclusion has almost halved. Students at risk of exclusion are supported effectively in the 'study support' centre and reintegrated back into college successfully.
- Leaders check carefully that students attending alternative provision are safe and attending regularly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved in all subjects and inadequacies have been eradicated. Teaching leads to good progress in some classes, but is variable in impact across all subjects and teaching groups.
- Where teaching requires further improvement, students of different ability do not all make good progress. For example, less able students do not make good progress in some classes because tasks are too difficult and teachers do not explain new learning clearly enough. In other classes, the most able students are not

given opportunities to persevere with challenging tasks. Students are sometimes moved through tasks too quickly so opportunities to develop deeper understanding are missed.

- Where teaching is most successful over time, it is based on teachers' good subject knowledge and in-depth understanding of the needs and ability of their students. Teachers use questioning effectively and provide examples of successful work to deepen students' understanding. In physical education, for example, students learn effectively by critiquing each other's work. In German, students make good progress because the teacher explains new concepts well. In science, a teacher showed particularly good subject knowledge through the adaptation of work to make sure students understood fully how earthquakes are formed.
- Students' reading skills are promoted well in different subjects and in reading sessions at Key Stage 3. Their mathematical skills are developed effectively in mathematics and consolidated across other subjects.
- Writing skills are developed with more varying success. Skills are developed well in English and in philosophy and ethics, where students are given the right amount of support and time to complete good quality longer pieces of writing. However, students are often given insufficient time and guidance in other subjects, so their written work lacks depth and substance.
- The development of students' oral and communication skills requires improvement. Students are encouraged to give their views but communication skills are not taught systematically or developed well enough in most subjects. Students do not always communicate with confidence, using different registers and techniques. Their vocabulary is not developed as well as it could be so students do not have sufficiently sophisticated language to express more complex ideas.
- Teachers' marking is up-to-date but is variable in impact on students' learning and progress. There is good practice, where teachers provide helpful guidance to correct errors and add to students' understanding, but some comments are too general and do not help students know how to improve. There are occasions when students are not provided with opportunities to reflect on comments and make the corrections suggested.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well in lessons and in additional support groups. Those who need it, benefit from personalised teaching and an adapted curriculum to make sure they achieve to the best of their ability.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2014, the proportion of students attaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics at grade C and above was well below the national average. That cohort did not make expected progress from their starting points because the students experienced poor quality teaching in the past. New leaders did all they could to quicken students' progress in their last year, ensuring that the vast majority left Year 11 with qualifications that supported them to continue their education or enter apprenticeships.
- Students in the current Year 11 cohort have made more rapid progress and are achieving higher standards, due to good leadership and improved teaching. Students have also benefited from effective additional support, which has helped to fill gaps in their learning. Students went into examinations well prepared this year. The college does not enter students early for examinations.
- The majority of students make expected progress from their starting points, across Key Stage 3. Teachers make sure students build on their knowledge and skills and check their progress carefully. If students are falling behind, they are given additional support in lessons or small groups to help them catch up.
- Students make expected progress in mathematics; mathematical skills are consolidated and extended well in other subjects.
- Literacy skills are promoted well in English. The drive to improve students' literacy skills in other subjects is beginning to have an impact in Years 7 and 8. However, older students in the college still make mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation, and are not always supported to rectify their errors.
- Communication and oral skills are a barrier for many students. Students do not have enough opportunities to extend their vocabulary and articulate their thoughts. Consequently, they often lack the skills to speak in a range of contexts and contribute their ideas confidently.
- The pupil premium is used wisely to expand students' horizons and support individual learning needs. In 2014, disadvantaged students were two grades behind other students in college and other students nationally in both English and mathematics. Gaps are much narrower in the current Year 11 and for younger students in the college as a result of the effective individualised support.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than they have previously. Well-targeted support, mentoring and better teaching in lessons are ensuring that students make at least expected progress from their various starting points. The newly introduced

'learning provision passport' is supporting parents and students to have more involvement in planning their learning and is proving successful.

- The most able students made expected progress to reach higher grades at GCSE in 2014. The most able students are usually given work that extends their learning sufficiently in each year group. However, they have limited opportunities to persevere with challenging tasks that require them to apply their knowledge and skills in some subjects.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Good leadership and strong partnership working with Stainburn School have secured significant improvement in the joint sixth form this year.
- Leaders ensure students receive consistently good teaching by using subject specialists and expertise from both schools. Good teaching is built on teachers' strong subject knowledge and a personalised approach. Effective marking and assessment help students develop a good understanding of how they can improve their own work.
- Students' behaviour is good; they feel safe, are punctual and attend well. They have positive attitudes in lessons and show a keen work ethic during independent study time. They model good behaviour around the college and show consideration and respect. Students have been given more opportunities to support younger students and lead initiatives, for example in sports, music, drama and enterprise. These initiatives are proving beneficial to all concerned.
- Students are highly positive, stating for example, 'we receive a lot of support from teachers both in and beyond the lesson, so we feel well prepared for exams' and 'teachers have been inspirational this year... even when there's been a lot to deal with because of the merger.'
- The improvements seen in students' achievement in 2014 have continued. Students in Year 12 make good progress because they are on the right courses, teaching is effective and they are given very effective individualised support where appropriate. The proportion of Year 13 students attaining at the higher A* to B grades at Advanced Level improved in 2014 and is set to rise again in 2015. Students' good progress and attainment in vocational subjects continues.
- Leaders have introduced more stringent entry criteria and provide good quality information, advice and guidance. Consequently, students entering the sixth form are able to choose courses that are suited to their ability and aspirations. As a result, the retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13 has improved significantly this year. Those who left Year 12 last year all went into education, employment or training. The vast majority of students leaving Year 13 have been successful in securing university places or further 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	112394
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	456491

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	372
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Tracy Stanton
Headteacher	Sandy Todd
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2013
Telephone number	01900 601944
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