

Sandwich Technology School

Deal Road, Sandwich, CT13 0FA

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Determined leadership has redoubled efforts to maintain the quality of education for each student. This has ensured students' level of achievement is similar to the last inspection. The school continues to improve.
- All leaders and staff are committed to the headteacher's vision for the school in which teaching, learning and students' achievement are at its heart.
- Students' behaviour in classrooms and around the school is a strength of the school. Their positive attitudes help them to make good progress with their learning. Students are well-mannered and conduct themselves properly.
- Good teaching is characterised by teachers' encouraging relationships with their students and clear expectations. Students respond well in most activities that teachers plan.
- Attendance has improved this year and is now similar to other schools. This has helped to improve achievement.
- The sixth form is good. Good leadership has tackled past weaknesses successfully so that now students achieve well. Nearly all go on to college, university or employment.
- The school's focus on improving students' reading, writing and mathematical skills is paying dividends. More students make expected or better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- The school checks students' progress rigorously. Teachers know where there are gaps in learning and where to direct help so that it has the most impact.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that safeguarding requirements are met so that students are safe at school. Students are confident that all staff are concerned for their well-being.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are keenly aware of the needs of others and are respectful of individual differences.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement is not consistently outstanding because teaching does not always challenge most-able students' learning sufficiently.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because teachers' marking and assessment are not always used consistently well to help students to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons of which four were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also made a number of shorter visits to lessons and assemblies.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, senior and middle leaders, and members of the governing body. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation including the headteacher’s self-evaluation, the school’s plans for improvement, minutes of governors’ meetings and current assessment data. Inspectors also scrutinised child protection and safeguarding policies.
- Inspectors observed students’ work in their books during lessons and looked at a sample of Year 10 books in English, mathematics, science and the humanities.
- Inspectors took account of 43 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of the 219 responses to the school’s own questionnaire carried out in November 2014.
- Inspectors considered questionnaires completed by 78 members of staff.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Wilson	Additional Inspector
Victoria Kirby	Additional Inspector
Susannah Wood	Additional Inspector
Paul Murphy	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Bray OBE	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sandwich Technology School is a larger than average-sized secondary school. The school converted to become an academy in 2010. When the school was last inspected in July 2012, it was judged to be good.
- The new headteacher took up her post in January 2015.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for students entitled to free school means and in the care of the local authority) is average.
- There are 33 students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding. This is funding for students who did not achieve National Curriculum Level 4 (the nationally expected level) in English or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- Six students attend alternative provision at the East Kent Learning Alliance.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and students' achievement to outstanding levels by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan lessons that provide challenging work for all students, especially for the most able
 - marking and assessment are used consistently across subjects to provide students with effective advice about how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, new to the school in January 2015, has a strong vision that puts students at the heart of the school. She has taken decisive steps to ensure the school's effectiveness is maintained. Her determination and principled actions, backed by governors and senior leaders, have created a positive ethos where teaching and students' behaviour can improve further.
- All leaders and staff share the headteacher's vision for the school and the commitment to making sure that all students reach their potential. A determined focus on learning and teaching informs decisions. For example, the streamlining of the senior leadership team has redefined roles and responsibilities so that raising achievement and monitoring students' progress are at the heart of leadership. Despite this major reorganisation, staff morale has remained high. As a result, there is a genuine commitment to maximise students' achievements by making sure that teaching promotes high quality learning.
- Middle leaders, while effective in many areas, do not always ensure that teachers' marking is effective so that students improve their work more quickly. Pay and performance are linked clearly to students' outcomes and a balanced range of evidence informs pay increases.
- All leaders, including governors, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, the school is focused on actions that will have the most impact on improving students' outcomes. For example, the school has rightly identified literacy as a key focus. Although improvements are at an early stage, the impact on students' reading and writing skills is reflected in improving GCSE results.
- The quality of teaching is monitored carefully so that good practice is shared and weaknesses, such as assessment routines, are identified. A good range of evidence is used to judge the impact of teaching on learning. This information is used well to provide individual support for teachers where necessary and contributes to the strong programme of development and training. Teachers report that the good opportunities to develop their practice are one of the reasons they enjoy working at the school.
- The progress of all students, including disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and lower achievers is checked thoroughly at frequent intervals throughout the year and the results are analysed in detail. The information is used to good effect to provide individual support for students or to adjust teaching programmes to fill in gaps in their learning. These actions are raising students' achievements successfully, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum covers a range of subjects and makes good provision for most students. However, leaders rightly identify that the most-able students are not always consistently challenged to do their best. Students start their GCSE courses in Year 9, giving them additional time to prepare for their examinations. The curriculum includes opportunities for students to learn about life in modern Britain and so they are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. There is a strong culture of mutual respect that pervades the school. This is evident in students' attitudes to their teachers and to learning. After-school activities, the Football Academy and 'Making a Difference' days give students good opportunities to experience success in areas other than academic studies. As a result, they make good progress with their personal development.
- The school's links with parents and the community are generally good, especially since many students travel long distances to school. These good links are reflected in the attendance at the school's eightieth year celebration and the exhibition of students' work in the creative subjects, both of which took place during the inspection. In the last year, parents have established a parent-teacher group to support the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet statutory requirements. All staff, including those working in the sixth form, are trained to know the signs of students being at risk and procedures are monitored by a designated governor for safeguarding. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The school provides a comprehensive range of careers advice. As a result, students follow subjects relevant to their needs and aspirations, including those that stay on in the sixth form. A small number of students attend alternative provision to enable them to follow courses with a vocational focus. These are monitored carefully by the school, including procedures for safeguarding, and the progress of students is checked regularly.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were positive about the way the school is led and managed.
- The local authority provides well-focused support to the school and this has been especially helpful at a

time when lots of changes have been introduced by senior leaders.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors carry out their roles effectively. They generally have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, often gained from the regular visits they make to the school. They have a strong desire to ensure that all students achieve their potential. Governors are ambitious for students and play their part in challenging and supporting the school in equal measure.
- Governors receive a good range of information from the headteacher about the school's performance and use this to hold the school to account. They know how additional funding is being spent and its impact on students' progress, including disadvantaged students.
- Governors have recently reviewed the range of members' skills, together with the governing body's procedures and effectiveness. They receive regular training and most recently, for example, have had guidance on the use of information on students' progress. This demonstrates governors' commitment to carrying out their duties effectively and to improvement.
- A measure of the governing body's close attention to financial management is that the school was able to fund the building of a new modern languages and humanities block.
- The governing body plays its part in ensuring that there is a clear relationship between teachers' performance and pay and in making decisions about pay progression. It sets clear targets for the headteacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. It is a notable strength, especially in lessons where students nearly always concentrate well and are keen to learn. Relationships between students and teachers are strong. They are based on mutual respect and this is one of the key elements for students making good progress.
- Students are especially good at working together, each taking responsibility for different aspects of the learning. Occasionally, where teaching does not challenge the most able sufficiently, students lose focus and the pace of learning drops.
- Students enjoy school and this is reflected in the rising attendance rates across all years, including in the sixth form. They generally arrive at lessons on time, ready to learn. Students treat the school environment well and inspectors noted the absence of litter. Their conduct in the canteen is mature and well mannered.
- Around the school, students' behaviour is typically good. At changes of lessons, during breaks and lunchtimes, and queuing for the buses at the end of the day, students conduct themselves sensibly and with humour. They walk on the left as requested by the school and move quickly to lessons. There are very few instances where students use offensive or insulting language. This is confirmed by the school's records and students' views.
- Parents responding to the online survey, Parent View, agree that behaviour is good and that their children enjoy school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel very safe and the great majority of parents responding to Parent View agree.
- Students are clear that bullying and racism are rare. They say that these are not tolerated by staff or classmates. Students know about the different types of bullying, including homophobic and online bullying, and say that on the rare occasions it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Nearly all parents and staff who responded to the questionnaires agree that the school deals with any cases of bullying effectively.
- The school caters for students' well-being effectively. It has good links with external agencies and uses their expert advice appropriately to ensure that the needs of vulnerable students are properly handled.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and exemplified by lessons that set students clear expectations, a range of activities and different approaches to learning. The renewed focus on teaching and learning is already having a positive impact. Teaching uses a variety of effective approaches, which stretch most students' thinking. Over time, the strong relationships that teachers have with students promote positive attitudes

and good progress.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved and this is reflected in the increase in students' achievements. Mathematics teaching is often characterised by the clarity of the work and clear expectations for the different abilities in the class, underpinned by a clear focus on problem solving. In one mathematics lesson, all students were stretched effectively to do their best. Good relationships enhanced the learning climate even further.
- Literacy skills are increasingly being developed well. The school uses a range of strategies to support students whose literacy skills, when they start at the school, are lower than their peers. English teachers provide specific literacy lessons and, across all subjects, teaching focuses increasingly on extending students' vocabulary and improving their spelling accuracy.
- Teachers know their students well and have a good range of information about their achievements to plan learning. For the most part, lessons take account of this information to set challenging work, although sometimes work is too easy for the most able.
- The school has developed its marking and assessment practice further since the last inspection. As a result, students' work is regularly marked. In many cases, this is having a positive impact on students' achievement. However, teachers' marking and assessment are not yet used consistently by all staff to give students clear guidance about how to improve their work. Sometimes, even when teachers do provide guidance, students' responses are not always followed up to help them improve still further.
- Most students are stretched and challenged by the work they are given. This is especially the case for less-able students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs. This group receives good support from other adults in the classrooms or is given work at the right level. However, sometimes the work lacks real challenge for the most-able students who find the work too easy. The most-able students often do well, but do not always achieve the very high standards of which they are capable.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students start school with attainment that is well below the national average. They make good progress across nearly all subjects, including English and mathematics. Achievement in 2014 was lower than previous years, but this dip has been reversed and is now improved, reflecting a return to good quality teaching. Despite overall attainment remaining a little below average, rates of progress are good. As a result, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Students' wider good achievement is illustrated in the exhibition of students' work in the creative subjects that inspectors visited during the inspection. The quality of their practical coursework in textiles, design and technology and art is exceptionally high and demonstrates students' creativity and their resilience to persevere over time. Teachers recognise that students' overall examination performance does not reflect the high standards of practical work because they find the written examinations more challenging. Nevertheless, the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in these subjects compares favourably with national figures.
- Students' attainment in science is good compared with other subjects taken by students at GCSE level. This is mirrored in the school's assessment information and work in books which show that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are continuing to do well.
- In a few subjects, such as humanities and modern languages, past performance has been below expectations. However, evidence from lessons and students' books shows that improved teaching in these subjects is resulting in better progress over time and students' achievement is rising.
- Although most-able students generally achieve well, reflected in students' past work and checks on their progress, on occasions they are not challenged sufficiently. The work they are set is sometimes too easy. The school is rightly tackling this by continuing to improve teaching, particularly for this group of pupils.
- Disadvantaged students generally achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. In 2014, the gap between disadvantaged students' achievements and those of others in the school and nationally in Year 11 widened slightly in English but narrowed in mathematics. Evidence from the school's analysis of students' progress and work in books show that the school is closing the gap between disadvantaged students currently in Year 11 and other students in the school. The gap between disadvantaged students and others nationally has also closed considerably. Leaders recognise that this needs to continue because of the wide gaps in the past. However, the school is tackling this underachievement successfully and the assessment information for Year 10 students shows a further closing of any gaps.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to support students who begin school below the expected

level. The focus on literacy and improving teaching in mathematics is paying dividends; achievement is rising and although attainment remains below the national average, progress is close to national expectations.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Well-targeted support, detailed tracking of students' performance and the good relationships teachers have with their students all have a positive impact on achievement. Students who attend alternative provision also make good progress; the courses they follow are well suited to their needs.
- The school no longer enters students early for their GCSE examinations.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is good. Students currently make better progress than was the case in the past. This is because of better information, advice and guidance for those moving into the sixth form, more rigorous entry requirements and improved teaching.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The sixth form is well led and is an increasingly successful part of the school's provision for its students. In 2014, all the disadvantaged students in the sixth form gained a university place. This year, a quarter of students have offers from leading universities.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Students' progress is checked rigorously so that teachers can identify those falling behind and provide additional support. Entry requirements to enter the sixth form have been raised to make sure that students follow courses that best match their needs. This reduces the risk of failing the examinations. Approved vocational courses ensure that students have a range of pathways available to them.
- Over time, performance at A level has improved, but fallen at AS level. This is reflected in the 2014 results where A level and BTEC achievement was broadly similar to the national average. AS level results were below average. However, improved teaching and better guidance for students entering the sixth form have helped to raise achievement this year so that it is now good.
- The behaviour and safety of sixth form students are good. They are polite, well-mannered and conduct themselves properly in lessons and around the school. They provide a very positive example to younger students.
- Sixth form teaching is typically good. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide challenging work that allows students to make good progress with their learning. The excellent relationships teachers have with sixth form students add considerably to their learning and achievement.
- Sixth form students' personal development is catered for well. As a result, they leave school as mature young people ready to take their place in modern Britain. This is reflected very clearly in the performances students presented for the exhibition of students' creative work.

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	136317
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	461944

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1442
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bruce Eccles
Headteacher	Tracey Savage
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 July 2012
Telephone number	01304 610000
Fax number	01304 610100
Email address	admin@sandwich-tech.kent.sch.uk

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