

# South Sefton College

Sterrix Lane, Litherland, Liverpool, Merseyside L30 2DB

## Inspection dates

9–10 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because students' achievement is uneven across the college. Not enough students make the progress they are capable of across a wide range of subjects.
- Systems put in place to track and monitor students' performance are not effective. Leaders do not speedily identify students and intervene with appropriate support to address any difficulties students may be facing.
- The practice of the best teachers is not shared effectively across the college to improve the quality of teaching and learning of all staff.
- External links are not well established to support teachers in their development of effective teaching and learning.
- Annual written reports do not clearly inform parents and carers of students' strengths and aspects of their learning that require further development.
- Leaders have not ensured that students use timetabled study periods effectively to further support their learning beyond the classroom.
- Not enough importance is placed on students' development of independent study and revision skills.
- Some teaching does not capture students' interest or motivate them to excel. As a result, overall, students' progress remains uneven.
- Not enough teachers plan work at the right level and students are not always challenged sufficiently well, particularly the most able.
- Students' skills in extended writing are underdeveloped and consequently many are unable to cope with the high-level examination demands.
- Too many students miss important learning at the start of the day. They arrive late and drift into lessons. Current systems to resolve this are not effective.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students are safe, well cared for and enjoy positive relationships with staff. They have positive attitudes to learning and their conduct around the college is exemplary.
- Leaders provide students with the opportunity to develop their skills and immerse themselves in a rich variety of non-qualification activities.
- Students achieve well in A-level English language, English Literature, law, physics, film studies, media studies, psychology and sociology, as well as BTEC performing arts and applied law.
- The college is highly effective in ensuring that students who re-take English and mathematics at GCSE level are successful in gaining a grade C or above.

## Full report

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

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment so they lead to consistently good outcomes for students by:
  - ensuring that learning activities are consistently matched to students' abilities
  - ensuring that the most able students are consistently stretched and challenged in lessons
  - developing students' skills in extended writing so that they can attain the higher-level grades
  - ensuring that teachers develop and embed students' independent study and revision skills
  - providing learning activities which stimulate students' love of learning so that they develop a passion and a motivation to excel.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - stronger external links are developed to allow teachers to sharpen their understanding of highly effective teaching and learning
  - the skills of the college's best teachers are shared more widely across the college
  - college systems to tackle students' underperformance are refined and applied with renewed vigour and urgency by all staff
  - students use their timetabled study periods more effectively so that they develop strong learning habits to support higher achievement
  - students' punctuality to college improves so that vital learning is not missed
  - written reports to parents include comments on students' work within the college.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The principal and vice-principal have not effectively established strong and consistent achievement by students across the college over time. They have an overly inflated view of what teaching and learning are typically like in the college and have been unable to implement effective strategies to raise students' achievement in a wide range of subjects across the college.
- Leaders do not have systems that robustly track and monitor students' performance across the college. They do not consistently ensure that the strategies that they put in place are successful in raising the performance of struggling students. Some students are left to languish in some subjects for too long before steps are taken to provide support for them. Some students do not successfully re-address their misconceptions or develop a deep understanding of their subject. As a result, these students do not reach their aspirational target grades.
- Teacher assessments and judgements relating to students' progress are not consistently accurate because students' work is not consistently checked or validated by other external providers. Consequently, leaders have been unable to swiftly identify declining standards and students have been left to flounder for too long before a rescue plan has been provided.
- Leaders have not established a strong culture of continuous improvement to develop teachers' professional skills and aspirations. Pockets of good practice within the college are not consistently shared to improve the teaching and learning skills of all teachers. Leaders do not routinely provide teachers with the opportunity to observe good practice beyond the college. Consequently, the quality of teaching is uneven.
- Staff and leaders' expectations of how students use timetabled study periods are too low. Too many students are allowed to squander vital learning time during the college day. Staff do not ensure that students maximise their time between lessons to enhance and support further learning. Students lean too heavily on teachers for support and their future learning skills are not developed.
- Leaders have not established effective systems to tackle students' late arrival to college. Too many students lose out on vital learning time because of arriving late to their morning lessons.
- The college is committed to engaging with parents and the community and uses a wide variety of approaches. For example, college newsletters and social media are used frequently to update parents about students' activities and achievements. However, written reports provided to parents about their child's progress are too shallow and lack personalised comments and clear targets for improvement.
- The curriculum meets students' needs well and reflects their interests and aspirations. Leaders work closely with parents and students to ensure that aspirations and final destinations are well supported through their curriculum choice. Leaders provide a plethora of non-qualification subjects, work experience, trips and visits. Students embrace these opportunities and broaden their experiences and horizons. The principles of the 16 to 19 study programme are well met.
- Most of the parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree

that their child is well looked after and that they would recommend the college. Parents hold teachers and leaders of the college in high regard and recognise the efforts made to ensure that their children thrive and achieve.

- The college forms strong links with partner secondary schools and establishes positive relationships with pupils from Year 10 onwards. Clear communication links are used to prepare for the needs of students prior to their arrival. Taster days are provided to local schools. Pupils are well informed about courses and have any uncertainties dispelled before their arrival. For example, bridging units are completed over the summer by mathematics and science pupils prior to arrival in Year 12.
- The learning resource manager is highly valued by students and staff. She ensures that the learning resource centre is well equipped and enticing to students. She is forward-thinking and proactive about supporting students' reading. There is a good range of books of different genres available to lure in all types of readers. Some students support the learning resource manager in her role and earn a librarianship qualification in doing so.
- The college has benefited from the effective quality assurance work undertaken by the local authority. The recommendations provided have helped leaders to focus on some of the right priorities.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body ensures that policies are up to date, comprehensive and accessible to students, parents and carers. They have ensured that the college website is compliant.
- Governors monitor and manage the college's finances effectively through a knowledgeable finance committee.
- Governors know about the links between teacher performance and pay progression and understand the work that leaders do to address underperformance.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. They have excellent knowledge of all current issues, including the 'Prevent' duty.
- Governors are strongly committed and aware of their responsibilities in raising college standards. However, information provided by leaders is not always accurate enough to allow governors to ask probing questions.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies are up to date and reviewed regularly. Safer recruitment practices are used throughout the college. The college ensures that staff know their responsibilities and can act on any concerns that may arise quickly.
- Staff are alert and have received training in the government's 'Prevent' duty along with other regular training on child protection. Students overwhelmingly feel safe in the college. Leaders fulfil their duty to ensure safe online access for students. There is an appropriate online monitoring and filtering system in place so that staff and students can safely access the internet through their own devices and through the college's computers.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across a wide range of subjects. Teachers do not regularly collaborate and share good practice with each other, so

approaches to teaching and learning are varied. Consequently, students' progress remains uneven.

- Teachers do not consistently plan learning activities that match the needs and abilities of students. The most able students are too often provided with work that lacks appropriate 'stretch and challenge'. As a result, students do not make the greater progress of which they are capable.
- Some teaching does not capture students' interest and does not instil a love for learning. Consequently, students are not curious to learn and their progress is not as strong as it might be.
- Teachers exploit opportunities during their lessons to ensure that students develop a good grasp of technical language. Consequently, students regularly use subject-specific language in their written work. However, students do not have well-established skills in extended writing. Many students have limited stamina and resilience and are not given enough opportunities to further develop their writing skills. Extended writing is not well established, promoted or consolidated across the college and this limits students' achievement.
- Most teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and build positive and respectful relationships with students to encourage them to want to learn. Teachers use these relationships effectively when they deliver aspects of personal, social and health education during the curriculum tutorials. Teachers tackle stereotypes and promote diversity through effective debates and discussions. For example, students learn how to avoid online grooming and have had discussions about mental health.
- Some teachers combine excellent subject knowledge with a very secure understanding of students' needs. They plan activities that match students' abilities well. These teachers are confident, adaptable and have high expectations of what their students can achieve. They inspire students to be successful. They skilfully question students, insisting on rigorous and extended responses. This ensures a deep understanding, and makes sure that misconceptions are dispelled. This better quality of teaching was most commonly seen in English language, law, applied law, sociology and physics.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The college's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Teachers ensure that students are knowledgeable about current issues. Students have been taught how to keep themselves safe from the threats of extremism and radicalisation. Displays in the corridors inform students of a range of support agencies they can turn to for help and advice. A college counsellor is also available to support students with further help should they need it.
- Students did not participate in the online questionnaire. However, those who met with inspectors felt safe and considered bullying to be quite rare and dealt with effectively by the college.
- Effective careers guidance supports students well in moving to the next stage of their education, training or employment. Students are supported with visiting speakers, one-to-one interviews and appropriate visits to universities. The college has connections with employers and universities so that students move on to worthwhile destinations.

- Students value the opportunities and activities provided for them at the college. The college non-qualification programme, the 'experiences programme', provides students with the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of well-balanced learning activities. Students access a weekly programme to develop their personal skills and widen their interests. Inspectors witnessed students enjoying badminton, yoga, sign language, book club and knitting. Students were also enthusiastic about their opportunities and work for the Duke of Edinburgh award.
- Students have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a rich variety of trips and visits to further develop aspects of their learning. For example, performing arts students developed their understanding of performance by attending a musical performance at a local theatre.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. This includes understanding about British values, which are modelled well by staff and promoted through lessons. Students treat each other with respect and take account of other people's views. They understand the importance of democracy in a fair society through, for example, taking part in elections to college council posts.
- Progress coaches provide good support to students and ensure that they help them overcome any social and emotional difficulties they may be facing. They are highly skilled and organise effective internal support through support mentors and use external agencies to plan support around students' needs.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Leaders have cultivated a calm and safe atmosphere across the college. The vast majority of students demonstrate exemplary conduct and mature attitudes in their behaviour. They are unfailingly polite and helpful and are very loyal and proud of their college. Students display good attitudes to their learning in lessons.
- Relationships in the classroom are good. Students have confidence in their teachers and are not afraid to ask questions when they do not understand. Students adhere to the college's rules in an exemplary way and no disruption to learning was witnessed during the inspection.
- Leaders' monitoring of attendance has recently become much sharper due to improved systems, and attendance has improved across the college. Leaders know which groups of students require additional support to help them to improve their attendance. Students with previously low attendance have improved their attendance since the effective use of the progress coaches in Year 12 and Year 13.
- Too many students arrive late to college. Current systems do not deter or appropriately curtail the late arrival of students into college.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Require improvement**

- Leaders have not done enough to ensure that students make consistently good progress across a wide range of subjects and year groups. Too many students do not make enough good progress throughout their time in college.
- Trends, over time, reveal that students do not achieve as well as they should. In 2016 students' results in academic subjects were still uneven.
- The most able students entering the college with high prior attainment do not consistently make the progress that is expected of them at the end of their academic

courses and across a range of subjects. Too many of the most able students fail to attain the highest possible grades.

- Information provided by the college about the achievement of current students indicates continued underachievement and variation in students' progress across a range of subjects and year groups.
- Disadvantaged students achieve better results at A level than their peers but not compared to pupils nationally. This is because of the clear support and guidance they are given by leaders and teachers.
- Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make broadly the same progress as their peers. This is because teachers take every opportunity to help these students to develop their personal as well as their academic skills. Teachers have high expectations of their achievement and provide well-targeted support for these students.
- Students' progress on BTEC national courses such as applied law and performing arts is very good overall.
- A very few students join the sixth form without a GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics. The college provides appropriate support and opportunities for these students to gain this qualification quickly. Success rates for those re-taking English and mathematics at GCSE level are high.
- The strengths in the teaching and learning of law, physics, English language and psychology are reflected in the good levels of students' progress in these subjects over time.
- Year 11 destination information indicates that pupils are being prepared effectively to progress to higher education, apprenticeships or full-time employment.

## School details

Unique reference number	135387
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	10002927

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	16 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	438
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Simmons
Principal	Frank McCann
Telephone number	0151 288 6300
Website	<a href="http://www.southsefton.com">www.southsefton.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@sssf.ac.uk">admin@sssf.ac.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	21–22 September 2011

## Information about this school

- South Sefton College is a school for 16–19-year-old students, funded directly by the Education Funding Agency and supported by Sefton local authority. It is one of very few centres in the country which are designated as schools but are exclusively for students aged 16 to 19.
- South Sefton College is smaller than the average secondary school. The number on roll has fallen since the last inspection.
- Most students are White British. Few students are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The college meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.



## Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the principal and vice-principal, middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and a newly qualified teacher. Inspectors also made a telephone call to a local authority officer.
- Inspectors formally interviewed a number of students and spoke to a wide range of students informally at break and lunchtime. Inspectors also observed students' arrival and their conduct and behaviour throughout the college day.
- Inspectors viewed tutorial periods and made a visit to observe the activities within the learning resource centre.
- Inspectors observed the work of the college across a range of subjects and year groups. Some observations of teaching and learning were undertaken jointly with the principal and vice-principal.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including the college's policies, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding records and performance information. Development planning, self-evaluation documents, minutes of meetings, and records relating to teaching and learning were also considered. During the inspection, detailed consideration was given to policies and practices relating to safeguarding and also to how the college prepares its students for life in modern Britain.
- Inspectors considered the 10 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as six responses from parents on Ofsted's free text service. They considered the responses to the staff online questionnaires provided by Ofsted to the college.

## Inspection team

Dawn Platt, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barnett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vicky Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Cooper	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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