

Sowerby Bridge High School

Albert Road, Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire HX6 2NW

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective, including in the sixth form. Leaders and governors do not ensure that staff understand and implement safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- The relationship between the governing body and leaders is damaged, preventing effective governance and hindering governors' ability to support improvement.
- Leaders and governors have failed to ensure appropriate financial controls. This has exacerbated the impact on the budget of fewer pupils attending the school. As a result, fewer staff are employed to support pupils' learning and welfare.
- Leaders have not secured the necessary improvements in the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress. This has been the case since 2008.
- The impact of additional activities to support pupils' progress is not evaluated, so leaders do not know what is working well and what is not.
- A few pupils are too boisterous during breaktimes and when they move between lessons.
- Attendance remains low. Improvements in this area have not been strong enough to ensure that attendance is as good as in other schools.
- Too many teachers plan activities that are too hard or too easy for pupils, including those in the resource provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Some teachers do not consistently use standard spoken English or model good handwriting. As a result, some pupils' learning does not move on quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Students in the sixth form make good progress in vocational courses. They are well prepared for their next steps towards adult life. The vast majority move on to further study or employment.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn to respect each other's different cultural and religious backgrounds. Activities to develop pupils' skills and knowledge as young citizens are effective.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- The local authority, governors and leaders must ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding quickly become effective by ensuring that:
 - all required checks on the suitability of staff are completed before appointments are confirmed
 - the recently introduced system for staff to report concerns about pupils is fully understood and used by all staff
 - a robust system is established so that leaders know if sixth-form students are on site or not
 - leaders regularly check that all staff understand and implement all safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - establishing a respectful and productive working relationship between governors and senior leaders
 - ensuring that governors provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to senior leaders to secure rapid improvements in all areas of the school's work
 - ensuring that governors and leaders have effective financial control over the use of all resources available to them, including the pupil premium funding.
- Improve the effectiveness of all leaders and managers, by ensuring that:
 - leaders diagnostically analyse the information they collect about the impact of teaching on pupils' progress, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they know what is working well and what is not
 - leaders' guidance and support to teachers to help them improve their practice is specific and focused on all groups of pupils making at least good progress
 - the impact of support to improve pupils' attendance is reviewed to identify the most successful approaches and these are used to increase attendance further
 - leaders have higher expectations of how pupils conduct themselves when moving between lessons and at breaktimes and ensuring that all staff share these expectations.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment to increase the progress all pupils make, in all year groups and over a range of subjects, by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently model good literacy skills and use standard English

- teachers use accurate assessment information to understand the barriers individual pupils and groups of pupils need to overcome in order to make good progress
- teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils already know, understand and can do.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Governors and leaders have not done all that they should in order to make sure that pupils are safe. Governors and leaders have not completed all the required checks on staff before confirming their appointments. Therefore, they cannot be sure that all staff are suitable to work in a school.
- Governors and leaders have not checked that staff fully understand and follow the school's safeguarding policy. Too many staff do not know what to do if they were concerned that a colleague may harm a pupil in any way or if a pupil made an allegation about a member of staff.
- Governors and leaders have not ensured that effective procedures and controls are in place to manage the school's financial resources. This, combined with a reduced budget linked to a fall in pupils numbers, has led to fewer resources for pupils to use and fewer staff available to support pupils' learning. The use of pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up grant has not been effective.
- Leaders have developed a systematic approach to monitoring the effectiveness of teaching. However, the judgements they make are over-optimistic. They do not analyse in enough detail the most effective teaching strategies for individuals or groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' feedback to teachers is not precise enough to guide teachers to develop more consistently strong practice.
- The subjects offered give pupils the chance to gain qualifications in a broad range of learning including English, mathematics, science, modern languages and history and geography. For some pupils this represents an appropriately high level of expectations. However, there are too few options for pupils whose needs and aspirations are suited to vocational or practical subjects.
- Staff and pupils' views received during the inspection were not overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work. Teachers who trained at the school are positive about the support they have received. Their continued development through the Master's degree programme is contributing to the evidence-based research they use to improve their practice.
- The school-based alternative provision 'Streetwise' is effective in supporting pupils to develop better social skills and attend more regularly. However, progress in different subjects is less strong for pupils who spend any length of time in the provision.
- Leaders do not routinely collect information about the number of pupils who arrive late for school or lessons. This means that they cannot act to improve pupils' attitudes towards punctuality.
- Although pupils' attendance has risen, it remains below average. Leaders are not probing deeply enough into the reasons for this and therefore have not found the best possible ways to challenge parents and pupils to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. Pupils' attendance at the pupil referral unit is too low for them to gain the full benefit of their placements.

- The local authority has not provided robust enough support to stem the deterioration in the relationship between leaders and governors, nor has it provided a timely response to concerns about the school's budget. The local authority has facilitated leaders' and teachers' beneficial involvement in the local school to school support programme. This has led to some improvements in the effectiveness of middle leaders and the teaching of English.

Governance of the school

- Governance is ineffective. Some members of the governing body and senior leaders are not working effectively together. Their working relationship is marred by differing views and, at the time of the inspection, was not conducive to ensuring the rapid improvements the school urgently needs.
- Members of the governing body have not provided an appropriate balance of support and challenge to leaders. As a result they have not ensured that the necessary improvements identified at the previous inspection were made.
- Governors have not agreed a plan that details how the pupil premium money or the Year 7 catch-up grant are to be spent this year. The effectiveness of previous plans has not been fully analysed, so governors do not have a clear picture of what has worked well in the past or what has been less effective. They have not responded to a decrease in disadvantaged pupils' attendance in 2016.
- Governors have not ensured that the following policies, published on the website, are up to date: complaints policy, behaviour policy, anti-bullying policy, special educational needs policy or safeguarding policy.
- Members of the governing body do have the necessary skills to provide effective challenge and support to the school. However, these skills have not been used to the full. Sometimes governors accept leaders' assertions about the school's effectiveness without probing more deeply to ensure the accuracy of the information.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. In addition to the weaknesses in safeguarding outlined above, at the time of the inspection leaders did not have a system that was sufficiently robust to ensure that concerns about pupils were relayed to the designated person in a timely and detailed way. This was rectified during the inspection; however, it was not possible to check if all staff understood the new reporting system.
- Leaders work effectively with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils who have encountered very difficult challenges in their lives. Leaders ensure that staff are aware of key areas of safeguarding, including female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and the 'Prevent' duty. Key staff have additional training that ensures appropriate support for pupils facing these specific difficulties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the school to ensure good progress for pupils across a range of subjects and year groups. This is evident from the

school's assessment information for 2016, from the work in the current pupils' books, and from visits to lessons, including those jointly observed with leaders.

- Pupils' progress slows when teachers plan work that includes information that pupils cannot read fluently. Sometimes, pupils lose interest in the tasks presented and their progress slows. Pupils' learning is also hindered when teaching does not build on skills in a logical sequence over time, as observed in some lessons and in workbooks.
- Some teachers do not consistently use standard spoken English when teaching or consistently model good handwriting skills. As a result, some pupils do not aspire to improve their speaking skills or handwriting.
- In some lessons, including in the sixth form, teachers skilfully plan work that challenges the majority of pupils to make gains in their knowledge and understanding. These teachers use questions effectively to push pupils to think of detailed answers. Detailed written feedback on targeted pieces of work, in line with the school's policy, gives helpful guidance to pupils. Pupils respond to the guidance and they make good progress.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, benefit the most from strong teaching in English and mathematics. Teachers give more detailed feedback in English and mathematics to the most able disadvantaged pupils to encourage better progress.
- Teaching assistants give good support to pupils. Leaders' decision to move teaching assistants to subject areas has had a positive impact. Assistants are now more confident in the subject knowledge they need to support pupils. They use their extensive knowledge of pupils to support teachers' planning. Support provided to pupils who have hearing impairments effectively enables the pupils to access learning.
- Developing pupils' literacy skills is a priority. Some pupils' books demonstrate that this is a strength in some subjects as the support enables pupils to develop spelling and punctuation skills, as well as how they express their ideas.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders ensure that pupils from a wide range of cultures and religious backgrounds learn to respect one another. This is crucially important as pupils can be exposed to examples of discriminatory and prejudicial behaviour in the local community.
- There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and develop their skills as young citizens. As well as opportunities to elect school council members, leaders arrange activities that mirror national democratic events such as the EU referendum.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils were keen to demonstrate the effectiveness of the firewall to prevent them from accessing inappropriate material on line. They are knowledgeable about how to report concerns about online bullying or unacceptable information. More importantly, they know how to assert their rights positively. For example, older pupils discussed confidently how to recognise when consent is given or not.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. A few pupils are too boisterous at breaktimes and between lessons. A small number of staff, including leaders, do not have high enough expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. They do not consistently challenge all pupils to move around the building in a calm, orderly fashion.
- Attendance varies for different groups of pupils and overall remains below other schools. Leaders' actions in 2016 did significantly improve the attendance of Gypsy Roma pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Pupils report that a small amount of bullying can happen but the vast majority are confident that staff will help in difficult situations. Incidents of poor behaviour increased last year as a result of higher expectations of pupils to follow school rules, including wearing school uniform.
- In most lessons, pupils are fully attentive to teachers and respond well to instructions. The majority of teachers are skilled in supporting pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since 2008, leaders have not been effective in securing and sustaining good progress for different groups of pupils. Information provided by leaders for pupils in each year group shows that progress was not strong enough in 2016. Overtime, average progress is not reducing the difference between the standards reached by the pupils and other pupils in most other schools.
- In 2015, by the end of Year 11 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made better progress in English and mathematics than was typical nationally. However, pupils achieved less well in science and history.
- Provisional information for 2016 shows that, by the end of Year 11, overall pupils made no better than average progress, compared with pupils with similar starting points in other schools.
- In 2016, the small group of most-able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, did not make the progress they should have done. Their progress was hampered by poor attendance. Work in current pupils' books shows that these pupils are being challenged. As a result, progress from the start of this year is strong for this group of pupils.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the pupils in the resource provision, was weak over 2016. Evidence in pupils' books indicates that this is continuing this year.
- Many pupils arrive at school with very poor reading skills. Much effort and time is given to encouraging pupils to read. As a result, many develop an interest in reading. However, the information provided indicates that during the school year 2015/16, a significant proportion of pupils did not make rapid gains in their reading age despite extensive periods of interventions.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive additional support to

develop their reading skills. However, the evidence provided does not give a compelling picture of rapid progress.

- Pupils feel well supported as they move into the school in Year 7. Pupils who arrived mid-year spoke highly of the support they were given to help them settle quickly into learning. Most pupils are positive about the guidance they are given to support their aspirational career choices.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- As safeguarding is ineffective across the school, it is also ineffective for the sixth form. So overall, the 16 to 19 study programmes are inadequate. Governors and leaders have not agreed a system to check whether sixth-form students are in school or not. As a result, leaders cannot account for the whereabouts of students in an emergency.
- However, other aspects of leadership of the sixth form are effective. Leaders identify any variation in the quality of teaching and their support is effective in securing any required improvements. As a result, students who enter the sixth form with a low GCSE grade make good progress in vocational level 3 and level 2 courses. Too few students study academic courses to report on the effectiveness of this aspect of the school's work.
- Effective teaching supports students to make good gains in English and mathematics lessons, so many improve their GCSE grades or obtain a grade C.
- Students benefit from the school-wide focus on social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. There is a good range of enrichment activities and the option to undertake work experience and/or work-related learning.
- Sixth-form students are keen to support younger pupils, particularly those who are new to speaking English. These activities ensure that the development of respectful adult attitudes. The vast majority of students conduct themselves around the building with respect for each other, staff and younger pupils.
- The overall outcomes for sixth-form students are positive. As a result of effective advice and guidance, good teaching and support, the vast majority of students stay in the sixth form to complete their chosen courses. Almost all then move on to further education or training that allows them to take the next step to achieve their aspirations.

School details

Unique reference number	107563
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10019721

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	855
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Smith
Headteacher	Kate Sanderson
Telephone number	01422 831011
Website	www.sbhs.co.uk
Email address	admin@sbhs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on the school's website. The following information was missing at the time of the inspection: the examination results of sixth-form students; detail about the expenditure and impact of the pupil premium and catch-up grant in previous years or the planned expenditure for this year; the full information required for the special educational needs information report; a current accessibility plan; and details about how parents can request paper copies of information on its website.
- The school is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The school has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional

language. Pupils speak over 40 different languages. The three largest ethnic groups are White British, Pakistani and Gypsy Roma.

- A significant number of asylum seekers, including unaccompanied asylum seekers, attend the school. A significant proportion of pupils join and leave the school other than at the start of Year 7.
- The school hosts the local authority additionally resourced provision for a small number of pupils with autism spectrum condition. A resource provision for pupils with hearing impairment is no longer part of the school. However, there remains an above-average proportion of deaf pupils. The proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans is above average and the proportion of pupils who need additional support for their learning is average.
- A small number of pupils are dual-registered with Calderdale pupil referral unit, where they currently receive all of their education. The school provides a school-based alternative provision for pupils known as 'Streetwise'.
- Since the start of the last school year, 37 staff have left the school and not been replaced, due to the financial difficulties the school is currently facing.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited a range of lessons across different year groups and subjects. Five of the visits were joint visits with senior leaders. During visits to lessons, inspectors listened to pupils reading and reviewed their workbooks.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and support staff. Fifty-three responses to Ofsted’s online survey of staff were also considered, and a letter from a member of staff.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils at breaktimes and more formal meetings were held with groups of pupils representing each year group and members of the sixth form. A total of 178 responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils were considered alongside the school’s survey of pupils’ views undertaken in the previous school year.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and five other governors, in addition to a second meeting with the chair of the governing body. A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The responses of the very small number of parents that responded to Parent View were considered, alongside the school’s survey of parents’ views undertaken in the previous school year.
- An inspector visited Calderdale pupil referral unit, where five pupils are dual-registered.
- A wide range of documents and records were reviewed in preparation for the inspection and during the inspection. These include the record on checks on the suitability of staff to work in school, minutes from governors’ meetings, pupil records and the record of how leaders monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching.
- A sample of pupils’ current books, representing the most able pupils, the most able disadvantaged pupils and less-able pupils, were reviewed in depth.
- In addition to listening to pupils, including the most able, read during visits to classrooms, a small group of pupils who currently have low reading ages read to an inspector.

Inspection team

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Natasha Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Jim McGrath	Ofsted Inspector
Melanie Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Crossley	Ofsted Inspector

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