

The Stourport High School and Sixth Form Centre

Minster Road, Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire DY13 8AX

Inspection dates

2–3 October 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards in the school have declined considerably since the last inspection. This is because in the past leadership and the quality of teaching and learning were not effective enough.
- Until September 2017 leadership of the school was ineffective. The newly appointed principal, together with her leaders and the trust, has begun to effectively stem the decline in standards. For example, the quality of teaching and progress of pupils are improving.
- Year 11 pupils' attainment in 2017 and 2018 was significantly below average due to weak teaching and intervention strategies that were ineffective. Achievements of current pupils at the school are beginning to improve.
- The progress of disadvantaged and more able pupils, although improving, is too slow. Leaders are addressing the underperformance. However, it is too soon to see the impact.
- Leaders do not carry out sufficiently detailed evaluation and analysis of the information they have about pupils, for example on the impact of the pupil premium funding or the types of pupils that leave the school to be educated at home. Therefore, leaders are not able to spot any trends or patterns quickly.
- The curriculum did not historically promote effective learning and good outcomes. Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of pupils. Current pupils follow courses that match their career aspirations and abilities much better.
- Governors do not have a good enough understanding of the school's performance. Therefore, the governing body cannot effectively hold leaders to account.
- The behaviour of pupils is not yet good. Teachers do not consistently apply the new behaviour policy. As a result, a small group of pupils engage in low-level disruption.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders have created an inclusive school with a strong ethos, where pupils feel cared for.
- The school's numeracy centre provides effective intervention for pupils to catch up on basic numeracy skills.
- The pastoral system of the school is a strength.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders swiftly and effectively evaluate improvement strategies to check the impact they are having on pupils' outcomes
 - leaders routinely analyse and monitor information they have about pupils to be able to spot any trends or patterns quickly, for example in the types of pupils who are persistently absent or leave the school to be educated at home
 - leaders routinely evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding on pupils' achievement
 - governors are trained to understand externally published information about pupils' attainment and progress so that they can hold leaders to account for the school's performance
 - the rate of improvement is quickened and strategies lead to better outcomes for pupils.
- Improve teaching, so that pupils, especially the most able and disadvantaged pupils, make consistently good or better progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - consistently apply the school's policies, such as the teaching and learning policy and feedback policy
 - use resources that engage and interest pupils
 - plan tasks that do not keep pupils busy but deepen their learning and knowledge
 - provide tasks that stretch and challenge pupils so that they do not become disengaged or bored in lessons.
- Improve the behaviour of pupils by ensuring that teachers consistently apply the school's behaviour policy.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The new principal has been in post since September 2017. Since then she has shown an unwavering drive and determination to improve the school from a very low starting point. Standards in the school have declined significantly and too many pupils made poor progress due to weak teaching and ineffective leadership. New senior leaders have introduced several initiatives to bring about improvements. As a result, the quality of teaching, and the behaviour and achievement of current pupils are improving.
- There has been significant staff turbulence, and recruiting high-quality teachers has proved challenging in recent years, resulting in staffing shortfalls in some subjects. This has led to inconsistencies, disruption and fragility in the quality of teaching, which has had a negative impact on pupils' learning and behaviour. Leaders have recognised this and have acted suitably to bring about improvement, particularly in improving the number and quality of teachers and leaders hired. The school is now set to be staffed with expert teaching staff in almost all learning areas.
- The historical curriculum did not enable pupils to make rapid progress and reach the standards of which they were capable. Leaders have redesigned and implemented a new, more effective curriculum. Pupils now complete courses that are matched to their abilities, needs and career aspirations. However, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 still follow some 'legacy curriculum' courses that they started before the changes in the curriculum were introduced. Pupils' progress and attainment are closely monitored to ensure any underachievement is quickly addressed. As a result, current pupils are making better progress than those in previous years.
- The leadership of teaching is now strong. The newly introduced teaching and learning policy has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, which is now improving. Leaders provide targeted training and support for teachers because they know where teaching is strong and where it needs improvement. They recognise that inconsistencies in teaching remain and have effective plans in place to address this.
- Recent appointments at middle leadership level have been effective. Middle leaders form a hardworking and committed group of professionals. They are now fully engaged in the school's improvement drive. They routinely monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, middle leaders would benefit from further training on how to interpret published information for their subjects as they are not routinely able to spot patterns or trends to inform intervention or strategic planning.
- Leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the pupil premium funding lacks precision and detail. Leaders are not always able to identify which strategies are having a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils' achievement and which are not.
- A notable number of pupils leave the school roll. The majority of the pupils leaving the school roll are from Gypsy, Roma, Traveller backgrounds. Leaders do not routinely analyse information about pupils who leave and are therefore not able to quickly recognise any trends or patterns in the figures. For example, leaders did not know that a greater proportion of those who left school to be home educated in 2018 were pupils in key stage 4. This aspect of leadership is not sharp enough.

- Leaders use effectively any alternative provision they provide for pupils. Placements are carefully chosen to match pupils' interest and abilities. As a result, pupils who are at risk of leaving education complete their courses, gain suitable qualifications and move on to appropriate destinations. The monitoring of pupils at alternative provision is not as robust as it could be. Leaders are aware of this and have immediate plans in place to strengthen their practices.
- Leaders have, in a short space of time, created an inclusive school where pupils feel well cared for. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and pupils feel safe. Parental support of the school is variable. Leaders recognise that more needs to be done to engage parents, especially those who wish to remove their child from the school roll and those whose children are persistently absent.
- The trust's actions, in the past, to respond to the decline in standards have been inconsistent. For example, improvement strategies were introduced too late to have an impact on Year 11 pupils who left the school in 2018. The trust's work now is focused upon rapid school improvement. Although some inconsistencies in the quality of senior leadership still exist, effective plans are in place to tackle these issues. It is too soon to see the impact of these actions.
- The vast majority of staff are supportive of senior leaders. They agree that improvements are needed and have confidence in the principal to bring these changes about. Staff agree that pupils are safe at school and well cared for. They say that the school is improving rapidly and are proud to work at the school.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is not effective enough in holding school leaders to account for school outcomes. Governors do not have a secure enough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, governors have not been effective enough in challenging leaders about low outcomes, especially for disadvantaged and more able pupils.
- Governors do not fully understand the published performance information for their school. They rely too heavily on school leaders to analyse and present information for them. As a result, the challenge they provide to leaders is not sufficiently effective to bring about the swift improvements needed.
- Governance has several strengths. Governors are proud of the school and play a very active part in school life. They visit the school regularly as link governors and understand many day-to-day issues. For example, governors regularly visit on open and celebration evenings.
- The governing body discharges its statutory duties with diligence. For example, governors carefully monitor the school's budget, they check that safeguarding arrangements are robust and ensure that performance management focuses on improving the quality of teaching.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that all statutory safeguarding duties, including recruitment and staff vetting checks, policies and training, are in place and are implemented effectively. They keep accurate records and liaise well with other agencies as and when required.
- Leaders have successfully created a culture throughout the school of keeping pupils safe. Staff understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe from harm. Members of staff receive regular child protection and 'Prevent' duty training and updates about safeguarding and, as a result, they are confident to make referrals if they have any concerns. Leaders deal with such referrals speedily and appropriately.
- The vast majority of pupils who spoke with inspectors confirm that they feel safe and secure in school. The majority of parents who completed Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire also confirmed that their children feel safe in school. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They understand the issues surrounding e-safety and knife crime, for example.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors about some low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons were clear that the low-level nature of the disruption means that it does not make them feel unsafe, although learning can be disrupted.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The leadership of the quality of teaching is strong. Leaders know where teaching is effective and where it needs further improvement. Appropriate training is provided to those whose teaching skills require improvement. The recently introduced teaching and learning strategy, which is underpinned by five teaching principles, is beginning to have a positive impact. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving, although inconsistencies remain.
- The new assessment system is now more effective. Pupils in all year groups sit a benchmark test, in each subject taught, at the start of the academic year. Their progress is then checked at appropriate times throughout the year. Leaders monitor and track pupils' progress to ensure pupils make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, teachers know when pupils fall behind and are able to close gaps in knowledge that exist from previous ineffective teaching.
- Teachers do not consistently plan lessons or use resources that match pupils' needs, abilities or interests. When this happens, pupils can become disengaged, bored and/or distracted. They then engage in low-level disruption, which causes learning time to be wasted and progress is slowed.
- Not all teachers consistently apply the new teaching and learning strategy. Where this happens, learning tasks are completed to keep pupils busy rather than deepen their learning or knowledge. These instances are now fewer and pupils agree that teaching is improving. They feel that their teachers care about how well they are doing and now provide the necessary support to help them improve when they need it.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong in most classes, although not

consistently. Where strong relationships are evident they lead to effective learning and strong progress. Pupils in these lessons display a positive learning ethos and good attitude towards their studies. They take pride in their work and engage actively in their learning.

- Pupils benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge and expertise. When teaching is effective, it is underpinned by skilful questioning and high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teachers do not yet routinely provide deeper thinking opportunities or appropriate stretch and challenge to the most able pupils, as a result their progress is still weaker than it should be. This has been recognised by leaders and plans are in place to train staff further to bring about the necessary improvement. It is too soon to see the impact of the work undertaken so far on pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching in the sixth form is stronger than lower down the school. As a result, students' outcomes have improved in 2018. Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching expertise and practices that exist in the sixth form are routinely shared and disseminated across the whole school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- A few pupils, including in the sixth form, have limited knowledge of fundamental British values and are not able to discuss values such as the rule of law or democracy confidently.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary across the school. When pupils are disengaged in their studies they demonstrate standards that fall short of the high behaviour expectations. As a result, some lessons are disrupted and learning time is wasted.
- Pupils and staff are overwhelmingly positive about the pastoral care the school provides. Pupils state that teachers and support staff care about them and this has a positive impact on their well-being and self-worth.
- Pupils understand different types of bullying and they know what to do if they experience it. A very small minority of pupils raised bullying as an issue. They expressed confidence in adults' ability to deal with any that occurs. Several pupils told inspectors how much they appreciated the support from members of staff when they experienced difficulties.
- Emotional health and well-being are a focus for the school. Assemblies are centred around these issues, and lessons in some subject areas have a key focus on these aspects, for example in a French lesson where pupils were discussing challenges faced by young people and how to respond effectively to them to enhance their well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- In some lessons, pupils respond with low-level disruption because lessons are not well planned, activities lack challenge and interest, teachers lack expertise in behaviour management or do not consistently apply the school's behaviour policy.
- A very small minority of pupils lack self-discipline. Teachers do not apply the school's behaviour policy consistently with these pupils. As a result, pupils are unclear about the expectations staff have of them and misbehaviour is not addressed quickly enough. In conversation with inspectors, pupils said that, 'Not all teachers deal with bad behaviour in the same way.'
- Attendance is in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, which has been low for several years, has improved. There remain a small number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Procedures to monitor and track these pupils and engage their parents more effectively are not as sharp and focused as they could be. Therefore, leaders are not readily able to identify which pupil types miss school regularly.
- Leaders use alternative provision well. Pupils who attend alternative provision are on appropriate courses. Pupils behave well and attend their placements regularly. Procedures to help them to re-engage with education, and to monitor their attendance and behaviour, are in place. However, these procedures are not as sharp as they should be. Leaders visit pupils on their placements and keep parents informed about how well their child is doing.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Year 11 pupils in the past were not being equipped with the skills they required to succeed in the new and more challenging GCSE examinations. This is because teachers did not plan and deliver lessons that met pupils' specific needs. Teachers spent too much time managing pupils' behaviour. In addition, leadership of the school lacked direction and focus on improving outcomes for pupils. As a result, outcomes declined significantly, including in 2018.
- Pupils currently at school make better progress, especially those in Years 7, 8 and 9. Assessment information and work in pupils' books show that learning has notably improved. This is because the quality of teaching is now better, the behaviour of pupils has improved and because leaders now track carefully pupils' achievements to inform intervention.
- Although improving, the achievement of the most able and disadvantaged pupils is still variable. Leaders have effective plans in place to tackle this underperformance. For example, targeted teacher training on providing stretch and challenge and catch-up sessions to close gaps in pupils' knowledge have been introduced in September 2018. It is too soon to see the full impact of these strategies on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities historically performed less well than their peers with similar starting points. The leadership of this

area is strong, and support provided during lessons by specialist support staff is having a positive impact on improving pupils' learning. However, these recently introduced actions are not yet having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. They need further time to fully embed and lead to improved outcomes.

- The school's assessment system is now more robust and effective in enabling leaders to spot where pupils fall behind and to put actions in place to help them catch up. Because of previous weak teaching and learning, pupils, namely in Year 11 and 10, still have some gaps in their learning. Leaders have recognised this and, together with the pastoral team, monitor closely and track carefully pupils' achievements. When underperformance is identified, leaders, teachers and form tutors act swiftly to put support in place. As a result, pupils' achievement is better. Pupils agree that staff care about how well they do in lessons and want them to achieve the best possible grades.
- Provision for independent careers information, advice and guidance is successful. Pupils receive a range of information about options available to them, especially in key stage 4, and learn how different courses lead to possible career pathways. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- In the past, the sixth form was poor and did not offer a positive experience to its students. It has undergone some significant changes in recent times. New leadership, a new building, higher expectations of students with regards to their attire and conduct, new entry requirements into the sixth form, a range of new partners to offer a wider range of courses, and strong teaching have resulted in the sixth form provision improving notably.
- Leaders of the sixth form have recently been appointed. Their work to promote further improvements is effective and all requirements of the 16 to 19 programme of study are met. For example, the new curriculum now offers courses, both vocational and academic, that match students' abilities and career aspirations. As a result, outcomes improved in 2018. Other improvement strategies, such as a broader offer of non-qualifying activities, have recently been introduced. It is too soon to see the impact of these on students' outcomes.
- Current teaching is a strength. Teachers know their students well and this results in strong and positive relationships between students and staff. Students benefit from teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects. Lessons are focused, planned well and lead to strong learning.
- All students who start the sixth form without a pass grade in GCSE English or mathematics are required to follow a course to improve their results. Success rates on these courses are variable, however.
- High-quality careers education enables students to make informed choices about their futures. Almost all students who completed their courses in 2017/18 moved into higher education, employment, training or apprenticeship.
- Students do not yet have full access to a broad and appropriate range of activities that supplement their academic studies. For example, students say that the social study programme activities on offer do not interest them or support their career aspirations.

- All students benefit from work-related learning in Year 12. Students value these opportunities and feel that they complement well with their academic studies. However, not all placements are appropriately linked to students' careers or destinations.
- Students are very proud of and complimentary about their sixth form. They are articulate and mature and conduct themselves in an exemplary fashion. Attendance in the sixth form is good.
- Some students leave the sixth form before they have completed their courses. This is because they move into apprenticeships at the end of Year 12. An increased offer locally means that students find these apprenticeship courses more valuable and take the opportunity of an offered placement. Leaders at the school responded appropriately to this issue and increased some of their provision. For example, the school is now in partnership with a local Rugby Club offering a programme of professional rugby training. The uptake for this course is high, and students travel large distances to join the school's sixth form as a result.

School details

Unique reference number	137162
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10048273

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	Academy
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	1,135
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	106
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Mark Preece
Principal	Ms Lorna Deakin
Telephone number	01299 872950
Website	www.shs.worcs.sch.uk/
Email address	office@shs.saet.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	September 2012

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form provision.
- The school is a founding member of the Severn Academies Education Trust (SAET). The school has a local governing body and a board of trustees oversees its work and effectiveness on the academy trust level.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is average, and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

- A small number of key stage 4 pupils attend alternative provision either full time or part time at 'Continu Plus' or 'Aspire'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and action plans; school policies; information about pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons and parts of lessons across a wide range of subjects and key stages, and observed some lessons with a senior leader. They observed pupils' behaviour between lessons and at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors evaluated the work in pupils' books and folders in lessons across a range of year groups and in the sixth form.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of governors, senior and middle leaders, and teachers. The lead inspector also held a meeting with the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The views of parents were considered through the 88 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views of 31 members of staff, provided to inspectors in the form of letters.
- Pupils met with inspectors in five separate focus groups, and inspectors had many informal discussions with pupils in lessons and at social times.

Inspection team

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Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Bassett	Ofsted Inspector
Sukhbir Farar	Ofsted Inspector
Antony Edkins	Ofsted Inspector

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