



South Wolds Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122883
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292534
Inspection dates 15–16 November 2006
Reporting inspector Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Church Drive
School category	Community		Keyworth, Nottingham
Age range of pupils	11–18		Nottinghamshire NG12 5FF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0115 9373506
Number on roll (school)	1062	Fax number	0115 9372905
Number on roll (6th form)	181	Chair	Mrs Kate Foale
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mr Simon Dennis
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	15–16 November 2006	292534

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

South Wolds Community School is popular. Pupils come from villages to the south of Nottingham and some from parts of the city who choose to come to the school. It is a specialist college for languages. It is of average size with a smaller than average sixth form. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. Relatively few pupils are from ethnic minority groups and most pupils speak English as their first language. There are fewer pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than the national average and fewer pupils with statements, although this has increased over the last three years. The school has received several awards including Arts Mark, Careers Mark and the International School Award. It has twice been nominated for a school achievement award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which has recently significantly improved. The school is led excellently by the headteacher who has focused strongly on strategies to secure school improvement. There is not yet enough consistency in the application of the successful strategies and in the way different subject areas are led and managed. The school judges its performance accurately. The progress made by different subject areas is closely monitored and senior leaders challenge underperformance. Similarly, the progress of individual pupils is tracked and suitable support is given where appropriate.

Academic standards are high, especially in mathematics and English. The school prepares pupils well for their future lives. Pupils benefit from an impressive range of activities beyond the basic curriculum, many of which have been developed as a result of the school's status as a specialist languages college. The international dimension of the school's work is a real strength and pupils get the chance to experience many different languages and cultures. This strength, combined with a good range of sporting and musical opportunities, greatly enhances their enjoyment and personal development.

Teaching and learning are good. The school has developed a detailed policy which is particularly helpful in providing a guide to good practice in this area. In most lessons pupils make good progress because teachers make the aims of the lesson clear, expressing in simple language what they expect of pupils by the end of the lesson.

Pupils are friendly and mature and generally behave well in lessons and around the school. They form good relationships with adults. The school successfully provides support for pupils with difficulties from a team of mentors with a wide range of experience and expertise. Pupils attend regularly and the majority of them tell us they feel safe. They feel able to make a positive contribution through the work of the school council and pupils are proud of the positive changes they have instigated. Older pupils also support local primary schools by teaching languages and supporting sporting activities.

Financial management is strong and the school has successfully managed to make some much needed improvements to the accommodation.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form provision is satisfactory with some good features in the personal development and well-being of students. The care, guidance and support provided for them are improving with the introduction of good systems to monitor their individual progress more closely. Students tell us that they greatly enjoy being part of the school community. They are enthusiastic, confident and cooperative and make a strong contribution to the daily life of the school.

They make satisfactory progress and reach national averages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are starting to make good use of targets for students to reach, but there are not enough opportunities in some lessons for students to develop

independence as learners. The range of courses available meets the needs of academic students well. Well established links with universities and further education colleges ensure that students are properly equipped for their future careers. However, there is little provision for more vocational qualifications.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons demonstrate the successful aspects of the best.
- Ensure that all school policies are consistently applied by middle managers.
- Develop curriculum opportunities which provide suitable pathways for pupils of all levels of ability.
- Ensure the good practice for raising achievement in the main school is reflected in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

When pupils enter the school the standard of their work is above average for their age. They make good progress. Since the last inspection standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 have been consistently above average, but there have been variations in the progress which pupils make. In 2005, for example, pupils had only made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 11. As a result of very effective steps taken by the school, results improved dramatically in 2006 and were the best ever. In national tests at the end of Year 9 standards were significantly higher, especially in mathematics, and pupils' performances in all subjects improved.

GCSE results greatly improved in 2006 and pupils made very good progress. More pupils gained 5 A* to C grades than in the previous year, which was already well above the national average, especially when the five grades included those for English and mathematics. Subjects which were particularly successful included English literature, geography, history, mathematics, religious studies and physical education. The progress of boys is close to that of girls and in 2005 was better in both key stages. The most able pupils and students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. The progress made by students in all key stages in the lessons observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory and often good. The school exceeded its targets in 2006 and was very close to the targets for specialist college status.

The achievement of sixth form students in relation to their starting points is satisfactory and standards in Year 13 are broadly in line with national averages. Although the proportion of students gaining the top grades in A level examinations fell, able students in Year 12 made good progress. The proportion gaining no qualifications rose in 2006 and in Year 12 a significant number gained very low grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils enjoy their lessons and the impressive range of additional activities in which so many of them take part. This is reflected in their good attendance. They generally behave well and get along successfully with each other and the adults in school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their awareness of cultural matters is very well developed and the international dimension of the school's specialist status is an outstanding feature. Their spiritual awareness is less well developed because the requirement for a daily act of worship is not consistently met, nor are spiritual opportunities across the curriculum clearly recognised and developed.

Pupils feel safe in the school and have good awareness of how to live healthy lives as a result of physical education lessons and additional sporting opportunities. They recognise what constitutes healthy eating and choose healthy options in the school canteen or for their packed lunches.

Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. They support younger or less able pupils in this school and in several nearby primary schools as well as international causes, such as a village in Africa and a school in Japan. They have the opportunity to take responsibility, for example, through the school council. They are rightly proud of improvements which they have directly influenced. Pupils develop a good range of skills in literacy, numeracy, problem solving and when working with computers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

In most lessons pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching. Teachers make the aims of lessons clear, expressing in simple language what they want pupils to know, understand and do by the end of them. They plan their lessons well to give a variety of learning activities which meet the needs of all learners. They ask thought provoking questions or provide challenging tasks to which pupils respond well. In the very best lessons, teachers maintain a good pace and have high expectations of what pupils will achieve, but still make the lessons fun.

They use technology effectively to interest pupils and help their learning. They involve pupils in assessing each other's work. The school is rapidly improving its approach to marking so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how to improve but this is not yet consistent in all lessons.

The school's policy for teaching and learning is intended to ensure that learning is interesting and exciting. In some lessons this is not achieved because tasks are too

easy and do not give pupils the opportunity to use their imagination or initiative. Teachers of these less successful lessons fail to establish a climate of lively interaction.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the sixth form, but too many lessons allow pupils to be passive rather than active learners. The school is good at celebrating achievement formally but there is less use of informal praise in lessons. Where praise is used, it is always well deserved.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum now meets all statutory requirements and contributes positively to pupils' progress. It provides well for the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in Years 7 to 9. Effective individual provision is also made for a small group of students at risk of not completing their secondary education and for a few low attaining students. Good and improving provision is made for pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is of a traditional academic nature, with a range of GCSE courses but it offers few vocational alternatives. A significant minority of students continue to follow academic courses which do not meet their needs well.

The school provides a clear academic pathway into its sixth form curriculum, which is satisfactory. There is a broad range of advanced level courses, which will be strengthened when the school introduces the International Baccalaureate next year. Vocational routes are at a very early stage of development. The curriculum is enriched by many opportunities, such as international exchanges and extra activities in music and sport. These are enjoyed by many. The numerous field trips and visits also make a valuable contribution to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils are well cared for through the high level of commitment and liaison between those staff in the centre for those pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities and also in the 'pupil zone'. This facility has enabled heads of year to concentrate on monitoring pupils' academic progress and on providing individual support in order to raise achievement.

Pupils' academic progress is assessed accurately and is tracked well in all subjects. Pupils understand their targets and are often involved in setting them. In all years communication with parents about their children's progress in lessons is good. The school provides good support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind because of their learning or personal difficulties. This takes place in lessons as well as in special sets and groups, or through individual support when needed.

Pupils feel safe and secure because the procedures to ensure their safety are well organised, up to date and meet recommendations. There are clear procedures in place for dealing with the small number of bullying incidents which occur. The school does not always clearly indicate to parents how these have been resolved, leading to a few parents expressing concerns. There are good arrangements for introducing new pupils to the school, including close and regular contacts with all of the local primary schools.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team analyses the school's performance perceptively, has a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses, and has set appropriate priorities for its future development. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding, such as in the management of resources, and is strongly endorsed by governors and colleagues. He gives clear strategic direction to the school and is ably supported by his senior team, so the school has a good capacity to improve further. Governors know the school very well. They bring a wide range of experience and skills to their role, which enables them to challenge and support the school effectively.

The leadership team monitors the performance of faculties rigorously, providing effective support to areas identified as underachieving. A regular weekly programme of professional development has been established. The virtual teaching observatory initiative, through which trainee teachers can observe lessons live by video link, has proved a valuable contribution to teachers' professional development. Extensive training has been provided for middle managers, who answer for the quality of teaching and the evaluation of performances in their areas. The quality of middle management is consequently improving, although it remains inconsistent.

The leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. There are new systems in place to monitor pupils' performances more rigorously and the developments taking place both in the curriculum and in strategies to improve teaching and learning are well chosen. These are yet to impact fully on the progress the students make in A level courses.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 November 2006

Dear Pupils

South Wolds Community School, Church Drive, Keyworth, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG12 5FF

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We found that there are many things about your school which make it a good school. For instance

- The good progress you make in learning and the high standards you reach.
- The exceptionally wide range of opportunities to take part in trips, visits, sporting and musical activities.
- The range of academic subjects you can study, including several different languages.
- The way the headteacher and his colleagues lead the school.
- The quality of most of the teaching.
- Your good attendance and the good relationships you form with adults in the school and with each other.
- The way you help each other and pupils in local primary schools.
- The support you provide for other communities, especially in other countries.
- The contribution you make through the school council to improvements in the school.

We think that your school can improve further by making sure you benefit from more lessons which are as good as the best. This is especially so in the sixth form where you need to have opportunities to become more independent in your learning. You can help in this by making sure you always behave well. We want your teachers to help you to improve your work with helpful comments when they mark it for you. You must make sure you ask for explanations when you make mistakes. The school could also offer a wider choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. These should include vocational subjects which would be better courses for some of you to study.

Thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your school and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved.

Elaine Taylor HMI

Lead Inspector