

Sandwich Technology School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118935
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313158
Inspection date	10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Feltham HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1242
Sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Chappell
Headteacher	Richard Wallis
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2005
School address	Deal Road Sandwich CT13 0FA
Telephone number	01304 610000
Fax number	01304 611886

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: students' progress from Years 7 to 9; the quality of teaching and learning, with special reference to the two subjects identified as inconsistent in the previous inspection report; and the sixth form. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), assessment data, parents' questionnaires, planning documents, observation of lessons, and interviews with staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Sandwich Technology School has a specialism in technology, as well as Applied Learning and Training School status. It is larger than average and is very popular. A system of selection to grammar schools operates in the local area, with the highest-attaining third of students selected by ability at age 11. Attainment on entry to this school is, therefore, below average, with few higher-attaining students. The school's sixth form is smaller than average, but growing. The school serves a coastal area with pockets of rural deprivation and some isolated villages. Half the student population is dependent on public transport to get to school, and this affects attendance on some days. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average, with slightly higher numbers of students with a statement of special educational need. A lower percentage of students than average are eligible for free school meals. Students are predominantly from White British backgrounds, with few students of Black, Asian or mixed heritage. There are few students with first languages other than English, particularly at an early stage of acquisition. The school has received many and varied awards, including Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, International School and Green Flag status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sandwich Technology School is an outstanding school. It provides an excellent quality of education for students in the main school and a good, and improving, education overall for students in the sixth form. Students make outstanding progress as they move through the school and achieve highly. The school's excellent senior leaders were acknowledged at the time of the last inspection, and they have continued relentlessly to seek improvement. As a result of an inspirational combination of support and challenge, the quality of teaching and learning has risen to exceptionally high levels. Students have been offered learning opportunities which have enabled them to aspire to further and higher education, way exceeding expectations on their arrival in the school. Many parents say that their children start their secondary career lacking in confidence and praise the school for the way in which it has transformed them into confident and ambitious young people who enjoy learning. One parent spoke for many: 'My daughter loves Sandwich and has gained in confidence through Years 7 and 8; this is thanks to some very supportive and inspiring teachers.'

Students enter the school in Year 7 with below average attainment. They make outstanding progress, resulting in above average GCSE results. Students do very well in English and mathematics. Results rose consistently over the three-year period to 2007, with a slight downturn in the provisional results for 2008. The school monitors students' progress and analyses performance data very carefully, and has an exceptionally clear understanding of how students are progressing. It sets challenging targets and generally meets or exceeds these. An important element of the school's success is that there is little variation in achievement between different groups of students. Boys and girls, higher-attaining students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities all achieve very well. Having identified that students were making faster progress in Years 10 and 11 than in their early years, the school introduced a new curriculum for Years 7 to 9. To ratchet up progress, this curriculum enables students to begin their GCSE work in many subjects at the beginning of Year 9. Another innovation, linking English and humanities, has been introduced for Year 7 students. This has resulted in students experiencing a smooth transition from primary school and focusing on developing reading and writing skills in a structured and coherent way. As a result of these initiatives, students in Years 7 to 9 are now making fast progress and their learning forms a very effective foundation for later success in GCSE and vocational courses.

Students enjoy their education at Sandwich Technology School, and have very positive attitudes to learning. Inspectors found behaviour in lessons to be outstanding, with very high levels of engagement and participation in lessons. The school has responded to concerns expressed by some students and parents about the effects of the misbehaviour of a small minority of students. Issues around behaviour and bullying are tackled openly in the school. Students know to whom to turn if they are worried, and are confident that their concerns will be addressed swiftly. The school has set in place this year a new vertical tutoring system, which will enable older students to 'look out for' younger ones. Students are responding very positively to this major change and parents are already noticing the improvements to relationships across the year groups. Plans to expand the role of sixth-formers in caring for younger students are well underway, and have the potential to develop the school's excellent pastoral work even further. A major strength of the school is the way in which it listens to students' views and acts on these to improve the quality of learning. For example, during the inspection, small groups of Year 7 students worked with their teachers to plan their own English and humanities curriculum for

next term. Year 8 students who had experienced the new curriculum last year evaluated with them how well it had prepared them for more subject-specific work in Year 8. All aspects of the school's very wide and successful curriculum for Years 9 to 11 have been evaluated by students and adapted to ensure that it meets their needs. This involvement of students in determining their own curriculum is highly effective and results in their very high levels of engagement.

Students have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives, and the school's curriculum enables them to develop this understanding progressively. They learn to respect differences through the many opportunities offered to travel beyond the school. They talk with enthusiasm of their trips to neighbouring areas of the country, to London and abroad. They demonstrate the success of the school's mission to 'open minds'. For example, they have a clear understanding of the importance of respecting cultural, religious and linguistic differences. Teachers take very seriously any racist views or actions encountered in this predominantly White school and young people are educated uncompromisingly to value and respect each other. Students demonstrate the tolerance and respect which is firmly embedded in the school's excellent curriculum. For example, they talked with knowledge and enthusiasm about the recent election of a mixed-heritage president in the United States.

Students are very proud of their school and identify their teachers as the major factor in their success. The quality of relationships is excellent and teachers work very hard to get the best out of their students. They have high expectations and inspire students to continue learning beyond the school. Teachers seek constantly to improve their teaching, and work in teams to share ideas. For example, they have recently developed very effective ways of getting students to work together productively in different groupings. This leads to high levels of student participation and, as a result, outstanding learning. The school's 'state of the art' resources and accommodation are very well exploited to make learning exciting. Students praise, for example, the many practical opportunities they have in their science, design and technology and performing arts lessons. This is a technology-rich school, from which students, staff and the wider community benefit.

All this does not happen by chance. The school's senior leaders work tirelessly to ensure all – students and staff – give of their best. They are self-critical and reflective, know their school very well indeed and seek continual improvement. All aspects of leadership and management are outstanding, and parents/carers and students support this view. One parent with three sons in the school spoke for many: 'I would particularly like to praise the headteacher and senior staff for their dedication and hard work.' This excellent team is led by a very experienced headteacher, who advises other schools on how to improve. The team has taken the school from strength to strength, with no complacency since the last inspection. For example, a clear focus for improvement on subjects identified as weaker at the time of the last inspection has had a tangible result on provision. Successful strategies have made a significant difference to ensure consistently high quality teaching and learning in English and to generate greater student enthusiasm for languages. This inclusive and very successful school has excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students enter the sixth form with levels of achievement that are often relatively low in the context of advanced study. They make good progress due to high quality provision, excellent care, guidance and support and a curriculum which is developing fast and meets their needs

very well. Outstanding induction procedures and regular advice on future directions are greatly appreciated by students. The aim of the sixth form is to develop well-rounded young people, confident as they prepare for next steps in life, and this aim is realised. Students already have many opportunities to develop leadership skills – for example, through the roles of head boy and head girl – and there are excellent plans in place to develop these further. Attitudes to higher education have changed dramatically in recent years, and the school's emphasis on getting students and their families to 'aim higher' is paying off. Whilst inspectors saw examples of excellent teaching and organisation of learning, students report some variation in the quality of lessons, which the examination results reflect. There are good plans in place to bring about further improvement in teaching and learning. Self-evaluation processes are accurate and realistic. Sixth form leaders have identified the direction in which they need to travel to raise further the quality of provision, which is already of a good standard. Plans are yet to be fully implemented but present arrangements are already bringing significant benefits to students. Sandwich sixth form provides a good education and has the capacity to make further improvements rapidly.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement current plans for the further development of the sixth form to enable provision and outcomes to match those of the main school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	1	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Students

Inspection of Sandwich Technology School, Sandwich CT13 0BU

During our recent visit to your school, my colleague and I greatly enjoyed meeting many of you, seeing you at work and listening to your views. Many of your parents and carers also told us how they feel about the school.

Yours is an outstanding school. The headteacher, his team and your teachers know you very well and have created a school that offers you courses which match your needs and lessons which you enjoy. This enables you to work hard and achieve extremely well. We were most impressed by your confidence, your enthusiasm for your work and your readiness to talk openly with us about your experiences. Many of you started school feeling quite under-confident and now you are ambitious for further success. You are rightly very proud of your school. Facilities in the school offer many opportunities for high-level practical work and you told us how much you appreciate these. You also told us how great your teachers are, and we agree!

The school knows that some of you, and your parents, feel that the behaviour of a very few young people sometimes spoils things, and it has organised new tutorial groups to give you all more opportunities to look after and learn about each other. We saw excellent behaviour in all the lessons we visited. You have a strong sense of right and wrong; you explained to us how learning about different people and cultures has made you more tolerant and respectful of others. Your school offers you many opportunities to develop beyond the classroom, and your achievements in a range of spheres are impressive.

Sixth form opportunities are expanding fast and we have asked your school to develop these in order to make the good sixth form as outstanding as the main school.

Thank you for your warm welcome to Sandwich. You were great ambassadors for your school and we wish you the very best in your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Anne Feltham Her Majesty's Inspector