

# Sir James Smith's Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112039
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	337825
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Sage HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	557
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jonathan Holt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jon Lawrence
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Dark Lane Camelford Cornwall PL32 9UJ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They looked at the school's policies, records of meetings, student records, 99 parental questionnaires, 43 staff questionnaires and 230 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the monitoring of students' progress and the quality of feedback and guidance they receive
- how well teaching develops students' key skills and helps them to apply these skills in their learning
- evidence of improvements in students' behaviour, attitudes to learning, attendance and punctuality
- how well improvements in teaching and learning are embedded across the school.

## Information about the school

Sir James Smith's Community School is smaller than average. The school's sixth form closed at the end of the 2008/09 school year with significant impact on the school's reorganisation. The school is situated in a rural and relatively isolated community with approximately 70% of its students travelling daily by bus. The majority of students are of White British origin. There are very few students who speak English as an additional language or who are looked after by the local authority. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average, but this masks some significant economic disadvantage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average. Sir James Smith's Community School has been a specialist humanities school since September 2006.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Sir James Smith's Community School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average. Following significant underperformance, the proportion of students achieving at least five top grades in GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, rose steadily over a three-year period to 2008. Results dropped in 2009, but current standards of work in Years 10 and 11 show that the school is on track to resume this trend of improvement. However, while the school has been successful in improving performance in English, mathematics and science, students' attainment in some GCSE optional subjects is still not good enough. This results from weaknesses in teaching in these subjects and an inadequate curriculum. Students are not prepared well enough in Key Stage 3 for some options in Key Stage 4. Not all students are provided with guidance that enables them to make well-informed choices about the options available to them, some of which are inappropriate.

Students generally make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are looked after well, but the good work undertaken by specialist staff is not always built on well by other teachers; data about these students' progress are not used effectively. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and classroom routines are well established. Students have a good attitude to learning and respond well when the teaching stimulates their interest. However, some aspects of good teaching are not well established throughout the school. In particular, not all teachers make full use of the information they have about their students to ensure that teaching is matched well to their needs. Much teaching does not fully involve students through questioning and discussion. Students are usually clear about their Key Stage 4 targets and teachers assess progress towards these well. However, many students do not have sufficient feedback on their classwork or their homework.

There have been improvements in attendance, punctuality and behaviour as a result of sustained and effective action by the school. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is now good, and the extent to which students feel safe is good. The care and support provided for vulnerable students are also good.

A weakness holding back students' progress is that the school does not have clear strategies for developing and applying students' skills in literacy, speaking and listening, numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Teachers do not routinely identify weak skills in these areas as potential barriers to learning, or deal with them effectively through their subject teaching.

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The senior leadership of the school is strong. They and the governing body are clear about what the school needs to do to improve; self-evaluation is broadly accurate, although some actions from the school development plan have not been fully evaluated. Key systems have been established to provide a secure framework for improvement, for example the monitoring of students' progress and academic review, although these are not yet fully embedded across the school. The strong senior leadership team is supported well by staff in key positions, although several members of the extended leadership team are relatively new in post and are developing into their roles. These factors, together with improvements since the previous inspection, especially in managing the school's reorganisation following the closure of the sixth form, demonstrate that the capacity of the school to secure and sustain the improvements required is satisfactory.

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

- Undertake an urgent review of the curriculum in both Key Stages 3 and 4 to ensure that all students are provided with an appropriate range of options, and are well prepared for them.
- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching to at least two thirds of lessons by the end of this school year by ensuring that:
  - all teachers make full use of the information they have about students to match their teaching to the needs of individuals and groups of students
  - teaching engages all students through better use of directed questioning, students' responses to develop teaching points, and discussion
  - all students are provided with frequent high quality feedback on their work.
- Take immediate steps to ensure that all teachers fully understand their role in developing and applying students' skills in literacy, speaking and listening, numeracy and ICT. Use the existing good practice within the school to show other teachers ways of working.
- Ensure that the systems and procedures that are in place for monitoring students' progress, and for intervening where necessary, are fully understood and implemented in all areas of the school before the end of this school year.
- Ensure that senior leaders rigorously monitor the effectiveness of all developments and actions they implement.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The quality of learning is typically satisfactory for all groups of students, although good or better learning and progress were seen in up to half of the lessons observed during the inspection. Students move around the school with purpose and arrive at lessons promptly and prepared to learn. Most students in Key Stage 4 are clear about their targets, and in most subjects are confident about what they need to do to achieve these. Students in Key Stage 3 are less clear about their targets. Standards in the key

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subjects of English, mathematics and science remain strong and they are also above average in history and modern foreign languages. However, attainment in GCSE citizenship, geography, ICT, music, physical education and religious studies is not good enough. This means that attainment in key subjects within the school specialist area of humanities is not good enough. Students have satisfactory skills in literacy, speaking and listening, numeracy and ICT, but generally do not apply these skills effectively in contexts beyond specialist lessons.

Students are considerate to others, including teachers and other staff. Attendance has improved and is now good. However, participation rates in school activities are generally low, even taking into account the geographical location.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good relationships with the classes they teach and classroom routines are well established and understood. Satisfactory lessons are often characterised by teaching that does not make use of the good range of information about students' progress and attainment to tailor lesson activities to their varying needs. For example,

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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low levels of literacy and other key skills are usually identified but not always dealt with effectively through subject teaching. In these weaker lessons, much of the work is teacher-directed and students are not fully engaged through directed questioning and focused discussion. All teachers ensure that assessment tasks are marked and students are provided with feedback about their progress towards targets. However, many students remarked that they do not receive sufficient feedback on their work to help them improve it.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support from specialist staff and the school makes extensive, and generally effective, use of teaching assistants. However, subject teachers often make insufficient use of data about these students' progress to build on this good work. Students are not provided with sufficient guidance or are not prepared well enough in Key Stage 3 for some subjects they opt for in Key Stage 4. Students' attainment in music, for example, is restricted as a result of poor preparation in Key Stage 3, and the GCSE courses in ICT and in physical education are not suitable for the students choosing them. These weaknesses undermine the good work in the school, such as the very effective use of a BTEC course in science, the enhanced work in English and mathematics and links to supporting students' coursework in other subjects, the introduction of dance and the expansion in the vocational courses on offer in Key Stage 4. The weaknesses in the curriculum lead directly to underachievement for some students.

The effectiveness of care and support is evident in improvements to students' behaviour, punctuality and attendance, and in the quality of the support for vulnerable students. The attention given to helping students work through their problems is admirable. However, this is let down by the poor quality of guidance on making well-informed choices about options in Key Stage 4.

There is no evidence that the school's specialist status has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching or on the curriculum.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The governors hold the senior leaders to account and act well as a critical friend to the school. The recent closure of the school sixth form has had an impact on the speed with which the school has been able to reorganise staff responsibilities and move forward on key developments. The small team of high quality senior leaders is clear about what the

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school needs to do to improve and have established a secure leadership structure and other systems to underpin future improvements. However, progress in embedding this across the school has been constrained by the reorganisation. For example, the school now has in place good systems for monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching across the school. These have led to some well-planned interventions to support students or to improve teaching but are not yet fully effective across all areas of the school, mainly as a result of variations in the quality of middle leadership. The focus of senior leaders on reorganisation means that the effectiveness of some actions in the school development plan has not been evaluated.

The quality of outcomes for students means that the school provides only satisfactory value for money. The size of the school and the closure of the sixth form have put significant financial constraints on the school. This has resulted in reductions in staffing and is restricting the development of the curriculum; for example, the school has to consider carefully vocational options because of the costs involved. This means that some plans for the development of the curriculum are embryonic. There have been some improvements in the overall quality of teaching, but the reduction in staffing and difficulties in recruiting high quality teachers pose problems.

The school does what it can to engage parents and carers and there are some signs of recent success. The school's focus on managing its resources has also led to restricted development in the use of partnerships and in promoting community cohesion. The school's specialist status has had no impact on improving achievement and attainment. However, the school places high importance on those partnerships that have a direct bearing on the well-being of students to ensure that all groups can access the curriculum without discrimination. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>



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## **Views of parents and carers**

Parents' response to the questionnaire was relatively low. The large majority of parents and carers who responded are happy with their children's experiences in the school. Parents generally feel that their children enjoy school, feel safe and make good progress. They have less confidence in how well their children are prepared for their future. The inspectors agree with parents about some aspects of this. Parents would like the school to take more account of their concerns. Inspectors judge that the school is aware of parents' concerns and acts accordingly. Around two thirds of parents feel that poor behaviour is dealt with effectively. Inspectors judge that behaviour in the school is good; the school sets a low tolerance for unacceptable behaviour and any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. However, the procedures changed recently and parents' views may reflect the previous system.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir James Smith's Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 557 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	10	67	68	17	17	4	4
The school keeps my child safe	17	17	67	68	11	11	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	19	58	59	12	12	5	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	14	14	61	62	12	12	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	14	14	59	60	15	15	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	7	7	66	67	20	20	4	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	7	58	59	24	24	3	3
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	15	53	54	14	14	5	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	10	64	65	12	12	5	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	12	51	52	20	20	11	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	7	7	55	56	19	19	7	7
The school is led and managed effectively	15	15	62	63	8	8	10	10
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	17	60	61	9	9	9	9

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir James Smith's Community School, Camelford, PL32 9UJ

I would like to thank all of you who spoke to us, answered our questions and completed the questionnaire during the recent inspection of your school. Inspectors very much appreciated the help you gave us and were impressed by your attitudes and manner. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings. We judge the school to be satisfactory. Examination results were getting better but, although some subjects did well, they dropped last year. Some options subjects in Key Stage 4 are not doing well enough. The following are our views of the strengths of the school and those features that could be further improved.

- We were impressed by how well you all get on together in the school. Most of you enjoy school, show good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school. Your attendance and the way you get to school and lessons on time have improved.
- The school looks after you well and keeps you safe; you feel confident in reporting any incidents and the school deals with these quickly.
- The progress you make in lessons is satisfactory because teaching is satisfactory. The school checks your progress and most of you are clear about your targets and what you need to do to improve, although this is not the case in all subjects.
- The curriculum is inadequate. Some of you are not prepared well enough in Key Stage 3 for the courses you choose to take in Key Stage 4 because the guidance you receive is not good enough, and the curriculum does not focus enough on developing your key skills.
- We have confidence in the headteacher and other senior leaders to make the school better. They have plans to do this, but these are not yet having full effect.

In order to improve further, we have asked the school to do the following:

- make sure that the curriculum that meets your individual needs and prepares you better as you progress through to Key Stage 4
- improve teaching so that lesson activities consistently meet the needs of all ability groups and teachers involve you more in your learning
- make sure that your skills in writing, speaking and listening, numeracy and ICT are

developed and used in all subjects

- have senior leaders regularly check that you are learning well in all subjects.

Yours sincerely

James Sage, Her Majesty's Inspector

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