

South Axholme Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118094
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339140
Inspection dates	26–27 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Linden Phillips

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	924
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Barratt
Headteacher	Mrs Marie Lister
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons and observed 30 teachers. They held meetings with staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's development plan; progress data; and documents relating to subject and whole-school self-evaluation, including an assessment of the impact of the school's specialisms. They analysed the responses from 207 questionnaires received from parents and carers, 30 from staff and 104 from students.

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

- the school's analysis of the past performance of students and the extent to which that analysis had informed the school's work to improve current attainment and progress
- how well teachers use information about students to support students' progress in lessons effectively
- how effective changes to the curriculum have been in meeting the needs of all students so that they enjoy their learning and understand how they can improve
- the impact of specialist status in raising aspirations and achievement across the school.

Information about the school

South Axholme Community School is an average-sized secondary school with specialist status in arts technology. Since the previous inspection the school has also been awarded specialist status in science. The school serves several villages in North Lincolnshire and almost all students are from White British families. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than that found nationally. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national average and the number of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below. The current headteacher took up her post in September 2007.

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

South Axholme Community School provides a welcoming and nurturing environment for its students. The calm and purposeful atmosphere ensures that students behave very well in lessons and around the school and is also reflected in above average attendance. Despite the poor progress made by students in 2009, the school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory.

GCSE results in 2009 demonstrated that attainment was broadly average but an improvement on the previous year. However, students reached fewer higher grades than nationally and many did not make the progress of which they were capable. The school identified that too narrow a curriculum was a major factor in students' previous underperformance. As a result, an extended curriculum was introduced in 2008 and it is now bearing fruit: students have benefited from courses which more closely match their interests and needs so that current achievement is satisfactory and indications are good for a large number of students. The improved curriculum is supported by the school's use of detailed tracking of students' progress, although the monitoring of learning in information and communication technology (ICT) is not as thorough as it could be. Current attainment, as indicated in students' work and in qualifications already gained this academic year, shows a continuation of improvement. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making satisfactory progress overall and some are making good progress.

Teaching is satisfactory overall and often good but it is inconsistent in quality. Teachers are improving their confidence in using information about individuals and groups to set aspirational but achievable targets. There is, however, inconsistency in how well teachers help students know what to do next to improve.

The headteacher, together with senior staff and the governing body, has effectively addressed the issues which contributed to underperformance. The new management structure focuses clearly on improving students' achievement. The school's two specialisms have made significant contribution to improved outcomes. Subject leaders and departmental teams have reviewed their work and acted on their evaluation of it. However the school's self-evaluation does not clearly summarise findings from subject departments so that they can be shared across the school.

The positive impact of a concerted effort to raise students' achievement is evidence of the capacity for sustained improvement which is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Improve the achievement of all students by:
 - increasing the proportion of teaching which is good and better so that students are provided with activities which engage them fully in their learning
 - ensuring that students are not only aware of their targets, but also the specific skills they need to improve in order to reach them.
- Further improve the effectiveness of the curriculum in matching the needs and aspirations of all students by:
 - reviewing cross-curricular delivery of ICT at Key Stage 4 and ensuring that all students are making expected progress in developing ICT skills
 - consolidating and extending changes to the curriculum so that it provides all students with the opportunities to succeed at school and in their learning and careers when they leave.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - linking subject self-evaluation into a coherent whole which is understood and shared by all staff
 - improving the use that teachers make of school data about students' underperformance so that students are given the help they need.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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

Students approach learning willingly and work with their teachers to make at least satisfactory progress in their lessons. Students respond well to high expectations: they use the time given to group and pair discussion to explore issues with other students but also show that they can work independently. When lesson activities are lively and engaging, students clearly enjoy what they do and are developing skills which will help them in their careers. Good careers advice and students' improving levels of skills in literacy and numeracy contribute to the high numbers of students who remain within education, or gain employment and training after they leave the school.

The pattern of achievement over the three previous years is mixed. The school's high attainment figures of 2007 dropped in 2008 but then improved in 2009. The school's robust monitoring of current levels of attainment, which includes qualification grades already achieved by students in Year 11, shows a clear continuation of improvement in standards. All groups of students are securely on course to show at least satisfactory progress towards gaining higher grades and meeting challenging targets in all year groups. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers because they receive focused individual attention.

In discussion and in questionnaires students say that they feel safe in school and almost all parents and carers also believe that students are safe. The school has dealt swiftly and properly with instances of bullying. Even so, a few pupils, parents, carers and

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support staff report that they do not always feel that issues of concern are fully resolved. Students learn how to deal with risks within a strong personal, social and health education programme.

The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students is good. Students take on responsibility readily and a well-established school council has effected positive changes. Students come to school ready to work hard but also enjoy social activities. Students comment, 'This is great place to make new friends.' Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and students respond with courtesy and respect for each other and towards adults. The school is effective in supporting students to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Students demonstrate a good knowledge of the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise and there is good take-up of the many after-school activities. Students benefit from a wide range of multicultural links and respond well to charitable appeals from groups and fellow students. They are active in contributing to their local community although they are less aware of national and international communities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

¹ 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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Teaching is satisfactory overall, often good and on occasions outstanding. Inspectors saw nothing inadequate and their observations matched the school's own assessments of the quality of teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well to include extra support for those who find learning difficult and additional activities for those who complete work quickly. However, they do not always use assessment to match work closely to what individual students need to do to improve. Lessons are well structured and teachers make expectations clear. In good lessons teachers are confident in encouraging students to take an active part. For example, students move quickly from simple to complex work, they talk in pairs and groups to articulate their understanding and they confidently lead class singing in turn. Less successful teaching results from too much talk by the teacher and insufficient active engagement from students.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving quickly. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets requirements and is enhanced by opportunities provided by specialist subjects. Additional changes prompted by national guidance are in early stages of implementation. The school has focused more on improvements to the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to allow students to choose from a broader range of courses which are better matched to students' needs, interests and employment opportunities. The specialist subjects of arts and sciences offer a wide choice of courses and have developed teachers' expertise. The impact of these changes is apparent in the achievement of the current group of Year 11 students. However, cross-curricular teaching is less well developed. In particular, although the ICT programme of study is taught within subjects, students' development of ICT skills is not sufficiently well monitored.

Care, guidance and support for students are very effective in ensuring their well-being. The school's pastoral system caters well for all students. The school makes effective links with its partner primary schools and with colleges and employers. Students in Year 7 say they felt welcomed into the school. The arrangements for advice and guidance for Year 9 students have been improved considerably so that students and their parents and carers have been able to consider and discuss a wide variety of options before students embark on study at Key Stage 4. Careers advice is good and includes information about opportunities across the area. Links with universities in the 'Aim Higher' scheme helps to raise students' aspirations to succeed at degree level. Vulnerable students have benefited from the school's close collaboration with outside agencies to ensure high levels of care and a continuation of educational support while in school and also when they move on to the next stage of education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

The shared vision of improvement in the school is evident. One member of staff expressed the views of many with the words, 'The school is a vibrant place to work,' and this was echoed in discussions. The implementation of carefully considered change over the last two years can be seen in improved achievement. Senior leaders and middle managers are increasingly working in concert to link performance data to teaching and learning. Departmental reviews inform planning so that teachers are becoming more confident in using the school's monitoring information to change the way they plan lessons. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that improvements will be sustained.

Staff training to ensure safeguarding is good. All safeguarding policies are monitored carefully by the governing body. Procedures are robust and take account of the views of parents and carers, and students. The school works closely with outside agencies to provide effective support for students at risk. Appropriate policies are in place to ensure equality and equal opportunity and the school has made good progress in its disability access plan. The school website provides parents and carers with a wealth of information about the school and reports on action taken as a result of canvassing their views. There are many productive links with partners which enrich students' experiences.

The Chair of the Governing Body has taken a lead in ensuring that the governing body is well organised within defined committees which meet the broader expectations of its role and link to the school's development plan. Governors have given effective support and challenge to making improvements and continue to work to follow up identified concerns systematically. The effect of governors' work in reversing earlier weaknesses is apparent, although the long-term impact has yet to be embedded.

The school is keenly aware of the potential of the locality in providing community links and also the limitations in enabling students to become familiar with the multicultural society in which they will learn and work. The school has completed a thorough audit of the extent to which it meets the requirement to promote community cohesion. The work is satisfactory and still in progress and it is too early to see its full impact.

The school's satisfactory effectiveness overall reflects satisfactory value for money. Finances are well managed. Funds are carefully allocated to maintain the successful projects which benefit most students but also to support students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to maintain secure links which enable them to gain qualifications.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3

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The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers are positive about their children's experience in school. Most parents and carers feel that their children enjoy school and also believe the school is well led and managed. Around one in ten parents would like more information about their children's progress. A similar number of parents and carers felt that poor behaviour is not always managed effectively. Some parents and carers expressed concerns that issues of bullying had not been fully resolved and some students and staff agreed. Inspectors noted the school's efforts to inform parents and carers about students' progress but the school might wish to check again whether some parents and carers have concerns. There is some evidence that on occasion teachers do not stop low-level disruption in lessons as quickly as they might. However, behaviour is generally good and inspection evidence showed that teachers and staff generally manage behaviour well. Inspectors found that instances of bullying had been dealt with appropriately but also felt that the school should explain more clearly the school's policies, and what the consequences had been, to those who have been affected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at South Axholme 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 207 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 924 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	30	122	59	17	8	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	73	35	130	63	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	65	31	118	57	20	10	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	29	130	63	12	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	26	139	67	6	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	19	126	61	30	14	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	19	131	63	28	14	2	1
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)	53	26	132	64	5	2	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	58	28	129	62	12	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	25	119	57	20	10	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	20	119	57	22	11	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	57	28	123	59	8	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	73	35	119	57	8	4	1	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



29 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of South Axholme Community School, Doncaster DN9 1BY

Thank you for talking with us when we visited your school. You were very courteous to your visitors and your views were helpful to us. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and looking at your work. Our thanks too, to you and your parents and carers, for completing questionnaires. All your contributions helped us in our inspection. We also spoke with the headteacher and other staff and looked at documentation in the school. These are our conclusions.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education, which is improving quickly. Students in 2009 achieved the school's highest results for GCSE grades of A* to C including English and mathematics. This is well above the national average, as was the figure for those who gained five or more GCSE passes. You and the school are right to be proud of that. However, at the same time, too many students did not achieve as well as they should have done. The school has understood the reasons for that and now offers a better curriculum which you are finding interesting and rewarding. Teachers are keeping a close eye on your progress and helping you to succeed. As a result, you now make satisfactory progress in your studies.

We have asked the school to build on improvements to make sure that your education is good. We would like the school to:

- improve the proportion of teaching which is good or better so that you are given activities which help you learn and know what to do next to improve your work
- note how well the new curriculum works in helping you to succeed and then make necessary improvements, in particular checking that you are all developing your skills in ICT
- pull together the work of different subjects and staff so that the school is able to evaluate its effectiveness fully.

You can play your part by working with your teachers in continuing to improve your work. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Linden Phillips

Lead Inspector

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