

Sandwich Technology School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136317
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382050
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Jacqueline White HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1366
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Chappell
Headteacher	Veronica Gomez
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
School address	Deal Road Sandwich Kent CT13 0FA
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 50 lessons led by 47 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the school's performance data and other documents, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding and equality policies, and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors took account of responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection and analysed 165 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 163 completed by students and 118 from staff.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average secondary school operates in an area where there is a system of selection to grammar schools. The school converted to academy status in November 2010. It specialises in technology and applied learning and is a training school. The sixth form is growing. The school serves a coastal area with pockets of rural deprivation and some isolated villages. Three quarters of the student population is dependent on public transport to get to school. Students are predominantly White British, with few students of Black British, Asian or mixed heritage. There are few students who speak English as an additional language, and very few are at an early stage of acquiring the language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school meets the current floor standards which set the minimum standards expected by the government. The school has received many and varied awards, including Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, International School and Green Flag status.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school and sixth form. Outcomes for students are improving. Most thrive in the very supportive learning environment. They feel safe, cared for and valued as individuals. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching, while good overall, is not consistently strong enough to ensure that all students make exceptional progress in all subjects.
- Most students make good progress. Attainment is rising. The school's reliable assessment information and results from students' early entry to examinations show a considerable improvement in the number of students gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. In the sixth form, although rates of progress vary across subjects, students achieve well overall.
- Teachers provide a wide variety of activities in lessons that encourage students to be actively involved in learning and develop independence. The most effective practice, that ensures students are challenged and inspired by their experiences, has not yet been fully shared.
- The school is a close-knit, orderly and harmonious community. Relationships between staff and students are very cooperative and characterised by high levels of trust. Students behave well. In lessons, they show consideration for each other, respond to questions frankly and ask for help when they do not understand. Sixth formers make an important contribution to the positive ethos of the school and are excellent role models for younger students.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The governing body works closely with the leadership team and provides effective support and challenge. School performance is well managed. The high-quality training provided by the school is improving teaching and the skills of subject leaders. The broad and flexible curriculum is under constant review and, combined with excellent enrichment activities, contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Virtually all students, including sixth formers, proceed into employment, or further or higher education.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by sharing best practice further to accelerate students' progress. Prioritise:
 - the effective use of assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all students appropriately
 - clarifying and sharing success criteria in lessons to check students' understanding and drive progress
 - marking that gives students precise feedback about how to improve subject-specific skills
 - the timely use of personalised tasks to extend students, particularly high-attaining students.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are low. Their literacy skills, in particular, are very underdeveloped. Standards are rising and the rate of improvement has strengthened considerably in the last year so that attainment is now broadly average. In the recent past there has been evidence of some underachievement – most notably in mathematics. This has been tackled robustly through earlier, well-targeted interventions, very close monitoring of individuals and groups of students and an intense focus on improving teaching. Students are now making good progress in the subject. Gaps between the performance of different groups have largely been closed. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are making good progress. The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals has been slower to pick up. However, the school has an appropriate range of strategies in place to support these students and impact is evident.

Generally, students join the sixth form with relatively low prior attainment. High levels of support are effective in helping them to close gaps in their knowledge and skills. While there is variation across subjects, it is reducing. Overall, attainment in the sixth form is rising.

Parents and carers are happy with the progress their children make. Inspection evidence shows that students make the most progress in lessons that are fast paced and challenging where they work hard and actively participate. For example, in an English lesson where Year 9 students were comparing different texts they were challenged by demanding, targeted questioning that required them to develop and share their responses with talk partners and the class. Their understanding was probed and continually evaluated. Teacher interventions and feedback to students were precise. Expectations for work and behaviour were high, met and rewarded by carefully individualised praise.

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The development of literacy skills is rooted in the curriculum. Students benefit from the good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in lessons. They also write and read in a wide variety of contexts. This gives meaning to these essential communication skills and ensures students gain a sense of purpose and audience.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall and students, parents and carers agree with this. In the best lessons, detailed planning is well matched to the needs and interests of students so that they are actively involved in their lessons and make good and, sometimes, outstanding progress. The variety of activities and teaching methods takes into account how students learn. Assessment is used effectively in checking their progress throughout the lesson and the skilful use of success criteria enables students to evaluate their own progress and work out how they can reach their target grades. The marking of work signposts the next learning steps clearly and gives specific guidance about the improvement of subject skills. Personalised tasks extend students' learning in a timely way so that progress is accelerated. These positive practices are not embedded across all lessons in all subjects. While teachers are provided with student achievement data, not all use the information effectively to guide their lesson planning. As a result, some students are not sufficiently challenged in their work and teaching has a reduced impact, especially for high attaining students.

Sixth formers benefit from small teaching groups where their individual strengths and weaknesses are well known and catered for. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported by their teachers and teaching assistants who have a good understanding of their needs and support their learning well in lessons.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed imaginatively and systematically in lessons, extra-curricular activities, tutor time and assemblies. In an assembly observed during the inspection, students were enthralled by a film of some sixth formers on a trip to India. The film conveyed powerfully how the experience broadened students' understanding of themselves, the world's diversity, and the importance of the values that underpin our relationships with each other.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspection findings are endorsed by most parents and carers, who think that behaviour is good. Some concerns were expressed about disruption in lessons. Last year, the school reviewed its behaviour management systems and delivered intensive training to staff. Records show a dramatic reduction in incidents where students contravene the high standards expected. During the inspection, standards of behaviour were seen to diminish in a very few instances where the pace of the lesson was slow or work was not sufficiently challenging. Generally, students were seen to engage quickly and constructively in lesson activities and behaviour was

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good, and sometimes exemplary. Usually, students' positive attitudes enhance the effectiveness of learning and their enjoyment of school. Attendance is currently average, but improving well.

Most students feel safe at school. They know how to limit risk and learn about different forms of bullying, including racist and prejudice-based bullying, and how to counter this. The school has a wide range of strategies and support mechanisms to deal with bullying when it occurs, and most students, parents and carers feel that the school deals effectively with bullying incidents. Students are proud of their school and are keen to support its improvement. For example, some have been trained, including in child protection procedures, to offer pastoral support to peers experiencing difficulties. They do this very responsibly and with great sensitivity.

Students develop into active citizens able to make an effective contribution to their community through the great variety of openings to reflect on social and global issues, be team members and leaders, and make their voices heard on many aspects of school development and learning.

Leadership and management

The headteacher gives clear direction to the work of the school. She models the school's strong values and commitment to the success of every student with vigour and determination. She is well supported by a senior team that works cohesively to improve outcomes for students. The leadership team has been restructured and some middle leaders are relatively new to their posts and gaining experience. However, they are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are growing in confidence. There is collective responsibility for provision and the achievement of students, with leaders at all levels fully involved in the processes of self-evaluation. Underperformance is tackled tenaciously. Development plans are clear and focused effectively on improving teaching and raising achievement further. Leaders acknowledge the importance of gathering more momentum in sharing the best practice. The school is improving, and students' good achievement and positive attitudes to learning show the capacity to sustain its direction.

The curriculum offers a wide choice of courses which meet students' needs, deepen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and develop basic skills. The technology and applied learning specialisms have made an important contribution to broadening students' life opportunities and preparing students for a fast-changing world. Provision for sixth formers is highly personalised with extensive one-to-one support and guidance. The school is outward looking and has developed strong partnerships with a range of providers that are highly productive in promoting learning within the school and wider community.

The governing body is well informed and ambitious for the school. Governors visit the school regularly and keep a close eye on its progress against the priorities for improvement. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. Systems for monitoring outcomes for different groups of students are

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very thorough. Well-targeted interventions underpin the effective promotion of equal opportunities. Discrimination of any kind is challenged robustly. The school is highly committed to, and successful in, establishing positive relationships with most parents and carers in support of students' learning and well-being.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



13 July 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Sandwich Technology School, Sandwich, CT13 0FA

Thank you for your very warm and friendly welcome when we inspected your school recently. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us so clearly and openly. Our inspection found that yours is a good and improving school. The sixth form is also good. Mostly, you make good progress throughout your time at school and your attainment is rising.

You are proud of your school and usually enjoy learning, including through the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities. Your positive attitudes in lessons help you to learn well and participate in the wide variety of activities. You welcome opportunities to take on responsibility. For example, the work that the 'little blue people' do is very impressive. While your attendance is currently average, it is improving. There is much good and some outstanding teaching in your school and usually you respond enthusiastically to the teachers' high expectations. However, there are some lessons where you are not sufficiently stretched. Overall, your behaviour is good and relationships with teachers are warm and trusting. You feel very well cared for and safe in school.

Leaders, including governors, are ambitious for you. They are an effective team, strongly focused on improving your life opportunities. They worked with us to prioritise areas for improvement. We have agreed that to increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching further, the most effective classroom practice needs to be shared fully.

You can help by believing in yourselves and maintaining your high level of participation in lessons and school life.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White
Her Majesty's Inspector

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