

South Shields Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131756
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	360317
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Lee Northern HMI

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	712
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Branch
Headteacher	Dr John Frain
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	McAnany Avenue South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 0PJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 33 lessons, taught by 32 different teachers, and held meetings with a representative from the local authority, groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school and examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. In addition, 68 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and progress and current levels of attainment for all groups of students across all aspects of the curriculum, and most especially in mathematics and science.
- The effectiveness of teaching in challenging more-able students to reach higher standards in all their subjects.
- The extent to which recent advances are founded securely on improvements in teaching and learning, and how effectively senior and middle leaders' plans and actions maintain the drive for high-quality classroom practice.
- The contribution made by partnerships – including with parents and carers – to better outcomes.
- The extent to which provision is effective in providing good outcomes in support of students' economic well-being and how significantly levels of attendance and persistent absence impact on this.

Information about the school

South Shields Community School is a smaller than average-size comprehensive school. The number of students on roll at the school has fallen by around a quarter since the time of the previous inspection, reflecting the changing demographics of the local population. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average and is rising in younger year groups. Just over half of all students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, although a much smaller-than-average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The school has held specialist status for business and enterprise since 2008 and holds the Healthy Schools Award. The school is due to move into new buildings from September 2011.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

South Shields Community School is a good and improving school. It has emerged strongly from a period of some turbulence following its formation from the amalgamation of two neighbouring secondary schools in April 2007. As a result of the actions of leaders and managers, the perception and popularity of the school in the local community have improved significantly. Since the time of the previous inspection, the school has addressed a number of important issues successfully: It has brought about improvements in attendance and levels of persistent absence; rates of progress across a range of subjects, most notably in mathematics and in science, are improving; the proportion of teaching that is good or better has risen; the school's performance across a range of measures has improved and the school has virtually eliminated the use of exclusion as a sanction. This track record, set in the context of the challenges arising from the amalgamation and the management of the imminent move to new buildings, demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

In the examinations in 2010, 97% of Year 11 students secured five or more good grades at GCSE. This represented a small improvement on the very high figure from the previous year and both sets of results were significantly above the national average for this measure. However, the proportion of students reaching this standard in 2010 when English and mathematics are included was much lower and, at 39%, was 15% below the national average. This was due largely to much weaker than expected results in mathematics. The school has taken robust steps to address this weakness and inspection evidence confirms that the rates of progress of all students in mathematics are now rising sharply. This is due to the combination of stronger subject leadership and to significant improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching in mathematics. Students agree strongly that their experience of mathematics is much improved – they enjoy their lessons and feel they are making good progress. As a result of actions taken to improve the match of the curriculum to students' needs and aptitudes, attainment in science is rising rapidly also. The progress made by more-able students is improving also as more teaching challenges them to reach higher standards. As a result of the good and sometimes outstanding provision to support their progress – particularly in literacy – students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress that is at least in line with that of their peers.

The school's procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of its work are rigorous and accurate. It has prioritised the need to build further on improvements in mathematics and to ensure there is greater consistency and impact arising from the school's work to promote literacy and numeracy across all aspects of the curriculum. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own evaluation that the large majority of teaching is good or better. Some outstanding teaching and learning were observed in physical education, mathematics and in English, where the active involvement of students was a significant

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ingredient in their high-quality learning. In the small minority of less effective lessons, the pace of learning was seen to slacken when teachers talked for too long and students adopted too passive a role in the lesson. The school has, correctly, identified the need to ensure that more teaching reaches the level of the best by enabling good practice to be shared more widely across the school. Although attendance has risen markedly since the time of the previous inspection, leaders and managers are determined to ensure that more students are enabled to access the opportunities on offer at the school by improving students' levels of regular attendance further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the percentage of students that achieve five or more good grades at GCSE, including in English and in mathematics by:
 - – raising standards in mathematics further
 - – strengthening the support for literacy and numeracy across all aspects of the school's work
 - – improving levels of attendance further and reducing the proportion of students who are persistently absent from school.
- Raise the proportion of good or better teaching and learning further by:
 - – identifying and disseminating those features of good practice that exist currently across the school.
 - – increasing the amount of lesson time in which students are involved actively in their learning so that more lessons proceed with a noticeable pace.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry to the school is below average, with a significant number of students who have lower than expected levels of literacy. Students' progress across a range of vocational subjects, particularly in sport, travel and tourism, performing arts and in media is at least good and is sometimes outstanding. Progress in GCSE options courses is rising also, due to better teaching and improved advice and guidance to students about those courses most appropriate to their needs. Students make good progress in English and the numbers of students securing grades A and A* across a broad range of subjects is rising also as teaching meets their needs more consistently. The progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals is good.

Students appreciate the range and quality of advice they receive about their future choices and careers. Their use of information and communication technology (ICT) and wider work-related skills are promoted very effectively through the specialism. In addition, almost three-quarters of Year 11 students left school in 2010 having achieved level 2 qualifications in literacy and numeracy, demonstrating the effectiveness of the school's work in preparing students for their lives beyond school. The proportion of leavers who were not in education, employment or training last year was well below the average seen nationally.

Students say they feel very safe in school and parents and carers agree strongly with this view. While a very few parents and carers expressed some disquiet over the ways in which

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instances of bullying had been tackled by the school in the past, students are very confident that the school deals with bullying quickly and effectively. Students' behaviour in lessons is very frequently good and sometimes makes an outstanding contribution to learning. A small number of students identified occasionally boisterous behaviour in corridors or elsewhere around the school site as an issue, although staff are vigilant and tackle this well when it occurs. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle well and the great majority access the healthy options available daily through the school canteen. The involvement of students in the life of the school and wider community is developing well – most notably through the 'SALPS' programme of student lesson observers trained to provide feedback to teachers on the quality of learning in lessons – but more needs to be done to ensure that the views of all groups of students are more widely represented.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. This is because leaders and managers have invested heavily in ensuring that there is a clear and consistent focus on increasing the proportion of lessons that are good or better. The best lessons are characterised by strong relationships between students and their teachers and by the ways in which students are encouraged to work actively in teams or in small groups. In an outstanding physical education lesson, the teacher used assessment information very effectively to show

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students how they could improve their performance. Because of the good quality of the teacher's questioning and the support for students in assessing each other's work, students were able to identify clearly the next steps and the refinements needed to help them improve. In a few less effective lessons, teachers talked for too long, restricting the opportunities for students to develop independent learning or reasoning skills. Some lesson planning is not effective consistently in supporting those students with the greatest level of need.

The good curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of experiences for students and meets their needs and aspirations well. Through the specialism, the school plays a leading role in the development of business and enterprise education across the region, including in its work with primary schools. Students enjoy the wide range of varied enrichment activities on offer and participate well in the opportunities available, particularly through the 'Wish-Wednesdays' programme.

Staff at the school monitor the progress of all groups of students with great care and professionalism. The impact of this care, guidance and support is seen clearly in the rising trend of attendance and in the quality of the support offered to students as they move up from their primary schools. Students value greatly the advice and guidance they receive at all times during their school careers. The progress and well-being of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are promoted very well through a range of provision that supports a large number of students with their reading and writing skills. This includes some striking examples of success in supporting a small number of students who were unable to read effectively at the time they joined the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels are energetic and determined in their pursuit of ambitious aims for the school and its students. Their vision for the school is shared very widely and the school is well poised for further improvement as it looks forward to the move to new buildings in the autumn term. Senior leaders have provided robust challenge about performance where this has been needed and middle leaders are held to account regularly for students' progress in their subject areas. There has been a sustained and innovative approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning and the school has exploited external partnerships well to this end. Teachers' professional development requirements are supported well through an extensive programme of training, with some bespoke packages put in place to meet individual needs.

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The governing body is highly supportive and brings an appropriate range of expertise in support of the school. It is sufficiently informed to challenge school leaders about aspects of performance and is beginning to explore further ways in which it can engage with the school more frequently at first hand and in evaluating the effectiveness of its work. Safeguarding procedures are good and the school is assiduous and tenacious in ensuring that it provides a safe environment for staff and students. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity can be seen in the effectiveness of its actions to ensure that any variability in the rates of progress of different groups of students is reducing rapidly. The effectiveness of the school's work to promote cohesion in communities close at hand is seen well, for example, through its involvement in the 'inspiring communities' project. However, its work at national and international levels is much less well developed and the school recognises the need to evaluate fully the impact of its work across these aspects.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who contributed their views to the inspection was lower than that normally seen for secondary schools. A very large majority of the replies received indicated positive views of the school, particularly in relation to the extent to which students enjoy school. A small minority of parents and carers expressed the view that the school does not promote healthy lifestyles well. Inspectors looked closely at the provision to support this aspect and found that students respond well to the school's health promotion approaches. The proportion of parents and carers who said that the school helps them to support their children with learning was higher than that usually seen nationally. Inspectors found there to be a growing number of parents and carers who were taking advantage of the facility to access details about their child's progress via a secure website provided by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Shields 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 712 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	25	45	66	5	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	22	32	41	60	5	7	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	37	39	57	2	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	28	45	66	1	1	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	20	29	43	63	5	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	28	41	60	6	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	22	41	60	10	15	0	0
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)	19	28	42	62	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	37	36	53	6	9	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	22	44	65	8	12	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	19	45	66	7	10	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	19	28	42	62	4	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	35	40	59	3	4	0	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



31 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of South Shields Community School, South Shields, NE34 0PJ

You will remember that a team of inspectors and I inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and took careful note of the views that you expressed.

We judged that the school is providing you with a good and improving standard of education. In your meetings with us and in your questionnaire responses, you spoke highly of the school's efforts to provide a safe and enjoyable learning environment. We found that the school promotes these aspects well.

Older students told us of how the school has improved since it was formed from the amalgamation of the two predecessor schools. All the students we spoke to told us that lessons are more enjoyable, that you like working together on engaging activities in class and that you feel you are making good progress in many of your lessons – particularly in vocational courses and in English and mathematics. The school works effectively to ensure that you are well prepared for your lives beyond school. A high proportion of you gain qualifications in literacy and numeracy and you do well in ICT and other work-related courses. You told us you value the advice and guidance you receive about your future choices.

Although the levels of attainment of students in Year 11 in 2010 were broadly average, we have asked leaders and managers and the governing body to ensure that more of you leave school with five or more good GCSE grades, including in English and in mathematics. To do this, we have asked that the school ensures that standards in mathematics rise further and that the school continues to promote the benefits of regular attendance. We have asked also that the school continues to increase the amount of good teaching you receive by ensuring that you have more opportunities to be actively involved in your learning in lessons.

You can play your part in improving South Shields Community School by continuing to attend regularly and by working hard. We hope you enjoy your new school building and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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