

Soham Village College

Sand Street, Soham, Ely, CB7 5AA

Inspection dates 08 – 09 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few lessons are good or outstanding. The school has overestimated the quality of some of its teaching and as a result teachers have not been given enough guidance about how to improve their work.
- In English lessons teachers do not always set work which is at the right level for all pupils in the class.
- Not all teachers give pupils sufficient advice on how to improve their work and sometimes pupils are not given the opportunity to respond to that advice.
- Leaders and other managers have not ensured that improvements in teaching have been sufficiently rapid.
- Although improving rapidly, governance has not yet secured consistently good progress in some key subjects. Governors have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good throughout the school.
- Achievement in English, and particularly in writing, is not good enough when the starting points of students in Year 7 are taken into account.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well. They feel safe and cared for by their teachers. The atmosphere in the school is respectful and attitudes to learning are positive.
- Achievement in some subjects, for example in Science, is consistently strong.
- Other adults work effectively with teachers to help pupils who are finding the work in class difficult.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 50 lessons. Nine of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- The inspectors examined pupils’ workbooks, records and logs about pupils’ safety, attendance and behaviour, and information about the performance of pupils in national tests.
- The minutes of governors’ meetings, reports made by external advisors and the school’s improvement plans were considered.
- Inspectors listened to the views of pupils and staff.
- The views of the 108 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, along with the views of those from whom inspectors received correspondence.
- The inspectors held discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and three further governors, school leaders and support staff.

Inspection team

James McAtear, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Alan Lee	Additional Inspector
Paul Burton	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Soham Village College is larger than the average sized 11-16 secondary school.
- Students are organised in ten forms of entry and are taught in a combination of ability sets and mixed ability groupings.
- The majority of students are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, those from armed services families and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below average. The proportion receiving support at school action plus and those who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.
- The headteacher also serves as executive headteacher for the Shade Primary School.
- Soham Village College became an academy school on 1st of April 2011. Its predecessor school, Soham Village College, was judged by Ofsted to be good when it was previously inspected.
- There are a small number of students who are taught some subjects away from school, for example one at Witchford Village College.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by increasing the proportion of lessons that are good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that any weaknesses in teaching are clearly identified and that actions required to improve teaching are more consistently followed through
 - ensuring that teachers mark students' work in enough detail so that students are clear about what to do better and are provided with more opportunities to respond to the marking of their work
- Improve rates of progress in English so that they match levels achieved in other subjects in the school by:
 - ensuring that teachers set work at the correct level to provide the correct level of challenge for all students
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring improvement plans focus on a more accurate assessment of the quality of teaching in the school and are implemented more rapidly to improve achievement
 - an external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students in Year 11 make less progress overall than might be expected given their starting points in Year 7. This is particularly so in English in terms of the standards reached in students' writing. As a result of this, achievement in the school requires improvement. However, the school's data and scrutiny of students' work show that students currently in Years 10 and 11 are making better progress than last year.
- Progress in English and mathematics is variable from year to year. For example, the proportions of students making expected progress in 2011 in mathematics compared very favourably with national expectation but compared less favourably in 2012.
- Although the school makes limited use of early entry for GCSE examinations, this has not had a negative effect on the progress of students including the more able.
- The school works well in partnership with Witchford Village School to make different subject choices available for a small number of its students, currently one student, who require this. These students make good progress.
- During 2012 progress in many subjects was good. For example, in Science levels of progress were far above those which were expected of similar students nationally.
- In 2011 the attainment in English of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding was around a grade less than their classmates at GCSE level. This rose to just over a grade in 2012. In mathematics this rose from just under a grade to just over a grade over the same period. These students make less progress overall than their peers in the school and the gap between these two groups is not yet narrowing. However, the school now uses this funding in a more effective way because it tracks the progress of these students more carefully so that it spends this funding on additional support and mentoring to help them make progress in line with other students in the school. Current information about how well pupil premium pupils are achieving shows their progress is now better and that the gap in their attainment and their classmates is beginning to narrow.
- The school uses funding it receives for those who did not reach Level 4 in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. This Year 7 catch up funding is used to provide individual and small group tuition which is now highly effective in ensuring that the progress made by these students in reading and numeracy is now improving.
- Students who have special educational needs do not make good progress consistently enough although in most year groups the picture is improving rapidly. This is partly because the school makes highly effective provision to ensure that students who have fallen behind in reading catch up and exceed expectations. For example, most students following individual reading programmes are making rapid progress in line with their classmates of a similar age.
- Students feel they make good progress at the school and the vast majority of parents and staff agree. However, although this is often the case, there is still too much variability in the progress students make.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because too few lessons are outstanding or good. This is because the school has not judged the quality of teaching in the school accurately enough. Overestimating the standard of teaching has not helped teachers to improve because actions to address weaknesses in teaching are not carried out consistently or rapidly enough.
- Teachers do not consistently provide marking in students' books which lets them know clearly how to improve or that gives them sufficient opportunity to respond to what their teachers have written in order to improve their work.
- The use of other adults who support teachers is carefully planned for. These members of staff are highly effective because they know the individual needs of the students they support in detail and work well in partnership with teachers to help them.
- The teaching of reading is highly effective in the school and so students have high levels of literacy and are able to understand challenging texts in a wide range of subjects. The school promotes the use of its library effectively and as a result many students demonstrate a love of reading.
- Teaching in some subjects is highly effective. For example, teaching in Science is usually good and often outstanding because teachers use methods which engage students but which ensure, at the same time, that they have securely grasped the key concepts being taught.
- Questioning at the school is often good. For example, in one lesson where Year 11 students were considering how to improve their grades the teacher asked, 'What would you take away from this work to reduce it by one grade?' Students' responses to lessons where they are challenged to think differently about familiar topics is highly positive.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and students say they agree with the statement, 'Teaching is good at the school.' While this is often the case the quality of teaching is still too inconsistent over time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour in lessons overall is good. This is because relationships between teachers and students are good and the atmosphere is warm and friendly. The ethos of the school is positive and the school provides an environment in which achieving highly is celebrated. Students are willing to learn and participate actively in lessons when teachers plan effectively for this.
 - Students' behaviour as they move around the school and during social time is good they are considerate towards adults and towards one another. They are articulate and show an impressive level of maturity.
 - Students say they feel safe in the school. Their parents and teachers agree. They are taught well
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about a range of dangers such as those encountered via the internet or those associated with fire, electricity and water.

- Bullying in any form is rare. Students understand the various forms this may take, for example racial or homophobic bullying. However, they are confident that on the rare occasion when this may occur teachers and other adults who support them will deal with such situations fairly and effectively.
- Rates of attendance are now above the national average and improving and the school's efforts to help those whose attendance is less frequent are normally effective over time. Students' punctuality between lessons and to school is good.
- Exclusions are uncommon at the school because the school works effectively to provide suitable alternatives. It provides places for students to go and receive help to improve their own behaviour from staff who are skilful in ensuring students learn how to behave well.
- Almost all staff, parents and students whose views have been shared during the inspection agree that behaviour is good at the school.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers do not ensure that school improvement plans are based in a view of the school's work that is sufficiently accurate. As a result these plans are not as effective as they should be either in raising the quality of teaching or in improving rates of progress among students as rapidly as they should be. For example, although the school has plans to improve standards in English, these have neither been precise enough nor implemented quickly enough to secure the improvements intended.
- School leaders are effective in making partnerships with other organisations work well for their students. For instance, their partnerships with another local school and a range of work experience providers has prepared them well for life in the world of work and in modern Britain as a whole.
- The school makes effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of students. For example, the school works in partnership with a major museum not only in terms of visits but also in broadening and deepening their understanding of cultures other than their own.
- The school provides a curriculum that supports the needs of the students. This is because it is broad and allows students to pursue their own aspirations. It also meets the needs of students, for example, in ensuring that those who need more help with reading receive this.
- At the time of the inspection the school met regulatory requirements for safeguarding.
- The school is part of an academy trust. Whilst the trust has been successful in allocating resources more efficiently it has not improved the quality of teaching or pupils' progress rapidly enough.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance at the school requires improvement. Governors have a secure and detailed understanding of the use of pupil premium funding and its impact in narrowing the gap. They understand the strengths and weaknesses in the school and are able to give a clear account of these. The current governing body supports the headteacher's work in managing the performance of teachers, for example in ensuring that performance is more closely linked to salary progression, Whilst they are improving, know their school and are highly committed to improving the school further, their current approach has not been in place long enough to secure good progress.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136610
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	412847

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Close
Headteacher	Carin Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2009
Telephone number	01353 724100
Email address	ctaylor@soham-college.org.uk

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