

Sewell Park College

St Clement's Hill, Norwich, NR3 4BX

Inspection dates 21–22 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Sixth form provision		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Standards in almost all subjects are low. Significant proportions of students make too little progress and GCSE pass-rates are well below the national average.
- Students' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are too low. Their work is often untidy with poor spelling and punctuation.
- Teaching is inadequate because too many teachers have low expectations of what students can achieve. They accept work which is of a low quality and provide insufficient challenge for the most able students.
- Disadvantaged students' achievement is much lower than that of other students nationally and within the school. Gaps in attainment between these groups are widening, especially in mathematics.
- Leaders have done too little to improve the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are ineffective and are not focused on raising standards. They have not ensured that teachers assess work accurately or mark work well enough.
- The sixth form is inadequate. Achievement is poor and shows little sign of improvement. Leadership in this area of the school is weak and has done little to raise the quality of teaching or monitor students' progress.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement. It has improved significantly since the start of this academic year, but there is more to be done because a small proportion of students adopt poor attitudes towards their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteacher has acted quickly to make improvements since his appointment in September 2014. Teachers and support staff acknowledge the positive impact of his actions.
- The interim executive board has a good awareness of the challenges facing the school. It is working effectively alongside senior leaders to make improvements.
- Students feel safe in school. They recognise and value recent improvements.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly in line with national levels, having been very low in recent years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons and observed learning in a range of situations across the school, including in the sixth form. In addition to longer observations, senior leaders accompanied inspectors during three series of short visits to lessons to evaluate the consistency of marking and behaviour. Students' work was evaluated in every lesson that was visited. Tutorial times were also observed.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, students, members of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- School documentation and policies, including those associated with safeguarding, were evaluated by inspectors. Assessment and attendance data were also evaluated.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cathryn Richards	Additional Inspector
John Greevy	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Carpenter	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students receiving the pupil premium, which is additional funding given for looked-after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals, is over 40%, higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action (about a quarter) and the proportion supported through school action plus or by a statement (about a seventh) are larger than those found nationally.
- The school does not meet the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The local authority removed the powers of the school's governing body in July 2014. An interim executive board replaced the governing body with immediate effect.
- The previous headteacher left the school during the summer 2014 and has been replaced temporarily by an interim executive headteacher.
- The school uses a small amount of alternative provision at City of Norwich College, Hewitt School and Hall Road, Norwich.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Act urgently to raise standards so that:
 - the proportions of both boys and girls making and exceeding expected progress match national levels
 - attainment gaps between disadvantaged and other students are closed
 - attainment in the sixth form improves in 'A' and 'AS' level qualifications
 - students' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics improve.
- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve
 - are able to assess students' work accurately
 - provide more-able students with challenging work and tasks
 - monitor how well students are learning in lessons
 - challenge students when attitudes to learning are not good
 - give students good quality feedback about their work
 - insist on good standards of presentation in students' work.
- Improve leadership so that:
 - leaders at all levels monitor and evaluate the impact of all improvement strategies
 - sixth form and subject leaders hold teachers to account for the quality of learning in their classrooms
 - the progress of individual students, including those in the sixth form, is more effectively tracked and checked
 - support for disadvantaged students is more effective in raising standards for this group
 - transition from primary schools ensures that students get off to a good start in Year 7.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders at all levels have not done enough to improve the quality of teaching over time. They have not responded to the decline in achievement with clear plans to improve standards.
- The interim headteacher has quickly appraised the situation and has made an immediate impact on the quality of education. For example, the rapid improvement in behaviour across the school means that the conditions for learning are much better. In a short time, the interim head teacher has constructed a very clear plan. Many of its actions are at a very early stage of development but there are clear signs that some teachers are improving their practice.
- Subject leaders fail to hold teachers in their departments to account. They know little about the detail of what occurs in classrooms and are reluctant to tackle under-performance where they find it. For example, the absence of marking in many books came as a surprise to some subject leaders because they do not monitor their subjects effectively. Those monitoring activities that have occurred have been largely ineffective and infrequent. Lesson observations or work scrutinies undertaken by subject leaders are of little value because expectations are too low.
- Additional funding provided by the pupil premium is ineffectively used. As a result, existing gaps in attainment either remain or are widening. Additional support has not been targeted precisely enough, or its impact monitored closely enough.
- The school's curriculum meets requirements. It is broad and effectively balances a range of academic, practical and vocational qualifications. The curriculum provides adequate opportunities for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Leaders have recently audited all subjects to find out where further opportunities in these areas lie. Existing activities, such as trips to Flanders Field and London, are enriching and popular. The school's curriculum prepares students appropriately for life in modern Britain.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are effective.
- The local authority's decision to replace the governing body with an interim executive board has successfully halted the school's decline in both achievement and behaviour. Local authority representatives supported the appointment of the current interim headteacher and are continuing to provide regular support and advice. The local authority has a very clear understanding of the challenges facing the school.
- Students receive an appropriate level of advice and careers guidance. They understand the choices that they have and are supported through applications to employment, training or the next stage of their education. This is an aspect of the school's broader support services which is valued by students. If problems arise, students feel confident that they will be listened to and supported. Leadership in this area is clear and purposeful.
- Attendance is closely monitored. The impact of leadership in this area has resulted in significant improvements in levels of attendance in the recent past.
- School leaders responsible for monitoring alternative provision are well informed about attendance and progress because of their regular contact with the providers and close tracking of progress.
- The leadership of the school's work with disabled students and those who have special educational needs has changed very frequently in recent years. A senior leader, appointed to this position in September 2014, has a clear plan for improvement, and has quickly identified the aspects that need the most urgent attention. Assessment data are not currently tracked well enough to ensure that interventions and support are having a positive impact.

- The school fails to promote equality of opportunity because significant groups, such as disadvantaged students and boys, underachieve. Leaders have recently implemented better tracking and assessment systems, but it is too early to see their impact. The school records show that incidents of discrimination have declined since the start of the autumn term, and are now rare.
- The school's systems to communicate with parents have been weak in the past. Until very recently, the school's website was difficult to navigate and provided little information. A new website is now available, offering better access to information and guidance. Of the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, a significant proportion expressed concern about key areas of the school's work. Just over 40% stated that they would not recommend the school to other parents.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board has acted decisively to improve leadership. Members intervened to prevent planned actions, likely to cause significant disruption to the school at a time when achievement is poor, from going ahead. For example, lesson times were due to be changed and the structure of the school week was being altered. Neither of these actions was targeted at raising achievement.
 - The interim executive board have reviewed the way that teachers' performance is managed. The board inherited a system that was not fit for purpose and did not tackle underperformance or equably reward good teaching. A new system is underway and focuses on holding teachers to account for the students' achievement.
 - School leaders are working alongside the interim executive board and the local authority to monitor the quality of teaching. Members of the board are regular visitors to the school, and are becoming increasingly familiar with its workings.
 - The interim executive board have a clear understanding of achievement across the school. They have drawn on an analysis of the available data to form their strategic plans. Expectations of what can be achieved are higher and aspirational targets, previously considered unattainable, are being set for the future.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. In some lessons, attitudes to learning are not good enough and teachers do not challenge this. In contrast, where teaching is good, students exhibit very positive attitudes to their learning and are keen to make progress. Students and staff report significant improvements in behaviour in recent weeks, following the arrival of the new headteacher. Students are clearer about what is expected of them in lessons and around the school.
- Behaviour around the school has improved. Most of the time the school is calm and orderly. Some students are too boisterous in corridors when they are unsupervised. The dining hall is busy and students enjoy sharing their break times together. They socialise well and are quick to remember 'please' and 'thank you' when it is appropriate.
- Attendance has significantly improved since the previous inspection and is now broadly in line with national levels. Students are punctual. Little time is wasted between lessons, enabling them to begin promptly.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Students say that they feel safe in school but report that incidents of name-calling, which can sometimes escalate into bullying, are in decline but still remain. In the recent past, such incidents were too common. The school's strategies to deal with this kind of behaviour have improved and students are much more confident that any concerns that they may have will be effectively tackled.

- The school's work to keep students safe when they are attending alternative provision is well organised. Almost all students are transported to their place of learning and a member of staff maintains regular contact with their teachers. Records of attendance are monitored and students' progress is tracked.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- A large proportion of teachers have low expectations of students. Too many tolerate poor quality work and ignore the small numbers of students who choose to do very little work. In one English lesson, for example, a student did nothing for twenty minutes while his classmates were working. This went unchecked by both the class teacher and a teaching assistant.
- Teachers do not plan lessons which challenge and stretch the most able. Inspectors found very little evidence of teachers providing work to extend the learning of this group of students.
- The quality of marking is very variable. In some classes, books have not been marked or looked at by the teacher since the beginning of term. Elsewhere, students' work has been marked occasionally. This is in contrast with the high quality of marking and feedback that a small proportion of teachers are providing: in these classes, teachers are aware of how well individual students are doing because they are very familiar with their work. These teachers provide guidance for students so that they know how to improve their work. This good practice is rare across the school.
- Very few teachers correct basic errors in students' writing. This means that spelling mistakes, poor grammar and inaccurate punctuation frequently go unchecked. There are very simple errors, such as the absence of full stops and capital letters, in far too many exercise books.
- Teachers, including those in the English department, have low expectations of how students present their work. Students' handwriting is often untidy, poorly formed and difficult to read. Teachers do little to remedy this and, as a result, too many students' work is of a very poor standard.
- Students entering the school in Year 7 with reading skills that are below age-related expectations receive additional support. Year 8 students who benefited from this support last year have made good progress and are making use of the taught strategies to tackle unfamiliar words. This support is not due to begin until November for students in Year 7. In the meantime, students who are struggling with reading are not receiving the help that they need.
- The accuracy of teachers' assessment is poor, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. A work scrutiny of students' writing from all year groups showed that teachers assess students with very different levels of attainment to be at the same level. For example, students writing in complex sentences, with sophisticated punctuation and making use of a varied vocabulary are assessed at the same level as a student whose writing is simple and barely punctuated. Half of the writing that was scrutinised during the inspection was inaccurately assessed. The picture is similar in mathematics, where students' work is also assessed too positively.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- GCSE results have been very low in the last two years. They have not reached the government's floor targets and have shown little signs of improvement. Approximately one third of students have gained good GCSE passes (including English and mathematics).
- Students start the school with standards that are below average. Far too many do not make expected levels of progress and standards at the end of Year 11 are well below average.
- Disadvantaged students make too little progress. In 2013, the last year for which there is national data, they were nearly two GCSE grades behind other students nationally in mathematics and over one grade behind in English. They were just under a grade behind others in the school in mathematics and about half a grade behind in English. The in-school gap in attainment between these groups is widening for

current students in mathematics. The gap is not closing in English and is getting worse in Year 11. The strategies the school has used to support disadvantaged students have been ineffective in raising standards.

- The proportions of students achieving the higher grades at GCSE level are too low. In almost all subjects these proportions are much lower than the national average. Students who enter the school with above average attainment in Year 7 are not doing as well as they should.
- Students' attainment in English is low. They make very slow progress in this area and there is too little difference between the quality of writing in different year groups. For example, the quality of students' writing in Year 7 is very similar to that found in Year 10 and Year 11.
- Attainment in mathematics is also low. Poor teaching over time has led to slow progress in this subject. Too many students have not mastered essential basic skills well enough to enable them to work on more complex mathematical concepts.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is similar to other students and is inadequate. Too little emphasis is placed on raising attainment for this group of students, who achieve less than similar students nationally. The needs of this group that relate to behaviour and attitudes are met well, and pastoral support is effective. However, staff who provide them with support in classrooms expect too little and accept very slow progress.
- Boys underachieve when compared to girls. Examination results show considerable differences in outcomes and current school assessment data for English show that the gaps remain across the school. In mathematics, boys and girls underachieve equally.
- The school's assessments show that students in Year 11 are on track to gain better grades at GCSE than for the past two years. Previous predictions at this stage have been accurate, but the achievement of this improvement is reliant on the successes of interventions and support programmes.
- Students attending alternative provision do well. There is a high completion rate in every course and all students progressed into further education last year. Attendance rates are slightly above the school levels and students report satisfaction with their courses.

The sixth form provision is inadequate

- Students entering the sixth form make too little progress. Attainment, as measured by success in 'AS' and 'A-level' examinations, is well-below average.
- Very small proportions of students achieve the higher grades in examinations.
- Teaching is varied in the sixth form. It is inadequate overall because it leads to very low achievement. Some teaching is good but too much requires improvement and some is of a poor quality.
- Leadership in the sixth form is inadequate. Weak tracking systems mean that leaders have little strategic overview of students' achievement. Data analysis is poor and lacking in detail. This means that leaders have little understanding of how effective teaching is across the range of subjects. Leaders do not make use of the grades teachers predict students will achieve in forthcoming examinations, and are not using them to set targets.
- Behaviour in the sixth form requires improvement because attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. Some students do not display the levels of independence needed at this stage of their education.

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	121176
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	451253

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	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	780
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	John Catton
Headteacher	Jeremy Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	March 2013
Telephone number	01603 411721
Fax number	01603 487575
Email address	office@sewellpark.org

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