

South Shields Community School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 131756 |
| Local Authority | South Tyneside |
| Inspection number | 319555 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 June 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Deborah Wright |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1052 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Jill Bell |
| Headteacher | Dr John Frain |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | McAnany Avenue South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 0PJ |
| Telephone number | 0191 456 8929 |
| Fax number | 0191 455 8543 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors, one of whom is seconded to Ofsted, and one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

South Shields Community School opened in April 2007, following the amalgamation of two local schools, Brinkburn and King George V. The school continued to operate on two sites until September 2007 when all staff and students moved to the restructured Brinkburn site. The school expects to move into a new building in September 2011. The school is a larger than average comprehensive. It serves an area of higher than average deprivation and the number of students entitled to free school meals is well above the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. The school has just been designated a specialist business and enterprise college.

Key for inspection grades

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| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

South Shields Community School provides a satisfactory education. Now in its fourth term, it is showing signs of increasing stability, clarity of purpose and improving quality of provision. The curriculum is being refined to reflect students' differing needs. Some learners, who may otherwise have become disaffected, have continued with their education because of action by the school to support them. Nevertheless, governors and staff acknowledge that there is considerable way yet to go to establish the school's reputation within the local community and to ensure that all students achieve their best.

The controversy surrounding the closure of two schools and opening of a new school led to a very difficult transition time for students, staff and parents alike. School leaders are determined to improve matters and have rightly focussed on setting the climate for learning. They have welcomed external support, including partnership with a Leading Edge school, to help them establish a new school culture, high expectations of students' behaviour and effective ways of working. As a result, significant gains have been made in improving students' behaviour and accelerating their learning. However, a small number of parents remain yet to be convinced that their children are making good progress.

Senior leaders used information from the previous schools to aggregate each student's performance and to set targets for improvement. The data indicates that at age 16, most students are generally doing as well as expected for their age, and are making satisfactory progress given their starting points when they joined the school. However, there is some underachievement which reflects the variability in the quality of teaching and also the erratic attendance of too many students.

In 2007, the proportion of students gaining 5 good GCSEs including mathematics and English was below average and the school knows this is a key area for improvement. Although students met their targets at the end of Key Stage 3, standards were also below average. Here standards are proving difficult to shift, particularly in English and science. After a period of instability in staffing, which had a negative impact on students' progress, behaviour and attitude, there are signs of improvement. Well managed changes in staffing by the headteacher, and targeted actions by senior leaders and staff, are making a positive difference to students' progress in lessons. Regular assessments show that student progress is satisfactory overall. Those students who access the well managed Additional Educational Needs department sometimes make good progress because of the effective teaching and support they receive.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is some good and outstanding teaching but also some that does not drive on students' learning well enough. The satisfactory curriculum is enhanced by good links with other providers. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development and well being and provides adequate pastoral and academic care, guidance and support. This aspect is well developed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Through charitable activities and dramatic and musical performances, students are beginning to contribute to the local community. Attendance levels however, remain inadequate.

The school is on a sound footing to move forward. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory and demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve. Leaders are tackling the areas which need improvement most with some success. The recent successful bid for

designation as a Business and Enterprise College further supports the school in its efforts to establish its new identity and ethos with staff, students and parents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in English and mathematics.
- Improve attendance.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching.
- Enhance communication with parents to improve their perception of the new school.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are broadly average and students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as the others because of the effective systems in place to support them. While school data indicates that students joining the school at age 11 have generally reached average standards, a high proportion have literacy skills below average. This has a knock on effect in other subjects. Careful monitoring by senior leaders shows that the targets set for the current Year 9 students may be difficult to meet, particularly in English and science. Over the year, these students have not all made the progress they should but well targeted interventions by staff in lessons are making a significant difference and progress is now satisfactory. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that the students in Years 7, 8 and 10 are making at least satisfactory progress and they are on track to achieve their realistic but challenging targets.

The school has worked very hard to ensure that Key Stage 4 students have had continuity in their learning. Information from assessment and modular examination results for the current Year 11 indicates that these students are on track to achieve their challenging targets. This indicates satisfactory achievement. The school is on track to improve slightly the proportion of students who gain five good GCSEs including English and mathematics, from the 33% achieved in 2007. Teaching strategies are beginning to boost students' progress, but it is too early to measure their full impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Students understand the value of following a healthy lifestyle although this is always not borne out in what they choose to eat or involvement in exercise. Students speak confidently about life at school. They speak positively about recent changes in how staff deal with incidents of bullying. The behaviour of students is satisfactory both in lessons and around school, showing that students are generally conforming and responding positively to the school's expectations of them. Relationships are usually harmonious between students and with staff and as a result, the school is an orderly community. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies in students' attitude, attendance and contribution to the school. Those students who attend school regularly show their enjoyment of school by good attitudes to their work. However, overall attendance is unsatisfactory and only a small

percentage of students take advantage of the extra-curricular activities on offer. Some students participate well on the school council and others act as mentors to new students or take part in school productions, such as the recent Wizard of Oz, but student involvement in the school community is not widespread. Students benefit from comprehensive careers advice, work related learning and opportunities to improve their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, which supports their economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and lead to students making satisfactory progress in their learning. Some good and outstanding teaching was seen. The school knows the quality of teaching must improve further to secure good progress for all students. Classroom practice is improving; targeted training for teachers has led to well planned lessons with clear learning intentions to share with students. The support of external consultants has strengthened the expertise of senior leaders and heads of department in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Their findings show that an increasingly positive climate for learning is emerging as behaviour improves and staffing becomes more stable. In the best lessons, imaginative activities sustain students' interest and encourage students to think for themselves and evaluate their own performance. In less successful lessons, the work is not well matched to the needs of students and there is insufficient pace and challenge. Assessment information about students is beginning to be used to inform teachers' planning so that lessons can be pitched at the right level to challenge students well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is evolving to meet the needs of all students and is set to develop further with the school's recent designation as a Business and Enterprise College. A good feature is the way the curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The provision is good when these students are withdrawn for specific support, for example in literacy. It is too early to see the impact of the introduction of the Learn to Learn programme in Key Stage 3, aimed at supporting the development of students' learning skills. At Key Stage 4 the curriculum provides students with the skills required to meet local economic demands through work related learning and vocational education, as well as academic subjects. Strong links with other schools and external providers, such as South Tyneside College, support this provision and as a result, students are able to follow a wide range of vocational courses. The school provides a range of extra-curricular activities; students can participate in a range of sporting activities as well as pursue their creative and artistic interests in drama and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall with some good features. Students receive good support and guidance when making option and career choices. Procedures for the transfer of students from primary schools work well; the effective work of a member of staff, whose role is to support this transition, ensure new students settle quickly. Procedures for safeguarding

students are in place and the necessary requirements for child protection and health and safety are met. Students' welfare and learning needs are adequately supported by the school's links with a range of external services and agencies. This is particularly effective for those students identified as vulnerable or having specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school gives targeted support to a significant minority of students with attendance problems but this has so far met with limited success. Students are clear about their personal targets for improvement although the effect of this is not yet fully evident in examination and test results.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with the support of his senior leadership team, has determinedly led the school through a very difficult period and has successfully steered it into calmer waters. Senior leaders and staff are working effectively to promote the personal development and well being of students; the culture of the school is changing and the climate for learning is improving, particularly through improved behaviour. The headteacher is eager to develop and implement systems and processes for the new school but has had to prioritise key issues, such as behaviour and staffing. He has strengthened senior leadership by recent additions to the team and this leaves it well placed to take the school forward. Systems to analyse and use data about students' performance are being refined. Plans for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, and which promise rigour and consistency, have been developed and recently implemented, but it is too soon to measure their impact. Key staff share with the headteacher a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what needs to be done to bring about improvement. Middle managers are taking increasing responsibility for the monitoring of teaching and learning within their departments although, as the school knows, there is variability in their effectiveness. Governance is satisfactory. Governors give generously of their time but are aware that they need further training and support to ensure they are in a strong position to support and challenge the school effectively. The school currently provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
|---|----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | NA |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

Personal development and well-being

| | |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 |
| The attendance of learners | 4 |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs? | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 |

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | Yes |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of South Shields Community School, South Tyneside, NE 34 0PJ

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. Particular thanks go to those of you who met with us and all of you who shared your views with us. This helped us to reach our conclusions about the school.

South Shields Community School provides you with a satisfactory and improving education. I would like to highlight the following areas:

- your progress is satisfactory and improving
- your behaviour is generally satisfactory
- there is some good and outstanding teaching at the school
- the school offers you a fair range of extra curricular activities
- you are helped to settle in quickly when you arrive from primary school
- you receive good support and guidance when making your option and career choices.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are all working very hard to establish the new school and to ensure you all achieve the best you can. We have asked them to make improvements in the following areas:

- raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics
- improve your attendance
- increase the amount of good and better teaching
- improve communication with your parents and carers so that their views of the new school improve.

You can play your part by making sure you work hard, behave well and attend regularly.

Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Wright

Lead inspector