

Springwell Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112966
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325728
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	927
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Bonnett
Headteacher	Mr Steve Goddard
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
School address	Middlecroft Road Staveley Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 3NQ
Telephone number	01246 473873
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Springwell Community School is an average-size mixed comprehensive school. It serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage, and has been the focus of a government renewal strategy. Over 98% of the students come from White British backgrounds. Standards on entry, while covering a wide range, are below average overall. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school has been a specialist arts college since September 2005 and holds Artsmark (Gold), Sportmark and Investors in People awards, together with the Basic Skills Quality Mark and National Healthy School Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its effectiveness to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. Concern for students is reflected in the good care and guidance that support their strong personal development. Students benefit from strong and effective links with external partners. Through these links the curriculum has been broadened, helping to raise achievement and meet a wider range of students' needs. Students make good contributions to the school and local communities, particularly through the performing arts, and display a satisfactory understanding of global issues. They feel secure and act safely. They understand the value of healthy lifestyles. Many students take advantage of the healthy options available at lunchtime and large numbers participate in the good range of sporting, and other enrichment activities the school provides. Effective support is given to vulnerable students and those who struggle with learning.

Leadership and management, including governance, are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and senior staff are offering effective leadership and vigorously tackling a decline in standards. The standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2008 were well below average and not as high as they should have been, particularly in English and mathematics. In order to support the drive to raise standards and achievement, the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been redefined and rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures introduced. In addition, new systems for setting targets and tracking progress allow all concerned to keep a continuous watch on students' academic progress. However, the impact of this action has yet to be seen in national test and GCSE examination results. In lessons, students make satisfactory progress and the school appears better placed to achieve the appropriately challenging statutory and specialist targets set for this year, and students are better prepared for the next stage of their education or working lives. Nevertheless, because of inconsistencies in the effectiveness of subject leaders in checking performance and challenging for improvement in their areas of responsibility, standards are uneven across subjects.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with many examples of good and occasionally outstanding practice. In the better lessons, students are helped to understand the learning objectives and how to achieve them. In these lessons, students behave well and make good progress because they are actively engaged throughout. In the less effective lessons, expectations are too low and learning activities lack challenge. As a result, students lose interest and managing behaviour becomes the focus of the lesson. Teachers' marking often provides students with clear guidance on what they need to do in order to improve the quality of their work, but this practice is not consistent across the school.

The school has satisfactory capacity for continued improvement and provides sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at the end of Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that students are consistently provided with appropriately challenging learning activities so that they are fully engaged in all lessons.
- Ensure that teachers' marking provides students with clear guidance on the standard of their work and what they must do to improve.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation procedures are firmly embedded in the work of all subject leaders so that they contribute fully to the drive for improvement.

A small proportion of the 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

Many students enter Year 7 with particularly weak literacy and numerical skills. In recent years, the standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 have been below average in English and science and well below average in mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 show a decline over the last three years. In 2008, there was significant underachievement in both English and mathematics. As a result, the proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was below the government's minimum expectation for this benchmark. However, because of changes introduced by the school's leadership, the majority of students are now making better rates of progress. Reliable school assessment information and other inspection evidence shows that standards, although below average, are rising and achievement is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the need to further raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, is correctly recognised as a key improvement priority. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make similar progress. Participation and achievement in the arts are good, as befits an arts specialist college.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and considerably enhanced through the schools arts activities. Students say that they enjoy school and that through the school council they are able to contribute to the school community. Most recently, for example, they have been able to give their views on the plans for the proposed new buildings. Most students display a sound sense of right and wrong, and behaviour, although satisfactory overall, is often good both in the public areas of the school and in lessons. As a result, the school is orderly and the atmosphere is conducive to learning. In many lessons students show enthusiasm for learning and a willingness to comply with the requests of their teachers. In a few lessons, inappropriate behaviour is linked with less effective teaching and weaknesses in classroom management. Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Participation in sporting activities is good and many enjoy the good range of healthy snacks and meals available. The school takes effective steps to deal with incidents of bullying so that students feel safe and secure. Attendance levels have steadily improved and are now closely aligned to the national figure. The satisfactory, though still inconsistent, development of basic skills, together with good progress in developing students' broader personal qualities, provides a suitable preparation for the next stage in their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Many students have weaknesses in basic skills when they join the school and staff are aware that satisfactory teaching and learning will not produce the rate of progress needed to tackle these weaknesses and raise standards. Through the very effective use of external consultancy advice and the increased sharing of good practice, much is being done to improve the quality

of teaching and learning, and the benefits are seen in many good and occasionally outstanding lessons. In these lessons, the pace is brisk with well-planned learning activities to stimulate interest and provide an appropriate level of challenge. Lessons such as these are often seen in the arts, for example, where students' enjoyment is clearly apparent in their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. However, this good practice is too inconsistent. In weaker lessons, expectations are too low and learning activities lack challenge. As a result, students spend too much time listening to their teachers and behaviour deteriorates, as their interest is lost. Inconsistent expectations are also seen in the marking of students' work. The best marking clearly signposts the next steps for learning but in many instances marking is superficial and not designed to bring about improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well suited to the needs and aspirations of students of all abilities. An innovative skills-based programme has been introduced successfully in Year 7 and a broader mix of academic and vocational courses have been introduced in Years 10 and 11. These are increasing students' motivation and contributing to the good progress seen in many lessons. Through an effective work-related learning programme, which includes work experience in Year 10, students are suitably prepared for employment and their future economic well-being. A well constructed personal and social education programme contributes successfully to students' understanding of responsible citizenship. However, the development of students' literacy, numerical and communication skills are not given enough support across all subject areas. Students with learning and other difficulties have good access to the curriculum and the choices within it. Specialist arts college status is used well to support learning throughout the school. Students' horizons are broadened through an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the performing arts. Many students participate in these and the wide range of sporting activities, other clubs and educational visits the school offers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a supportive environment in which students feel safe. Help for those who find learning more difficult and for vulnerable students, is particularly good, though support for gifted and talented students is not yet good enough. The school makes all the required checks to ensure the safety and protection of students. Parents speak highly of the good support available for those entering the school in Year 7. Rigorous procedures for setting students academic targets and for tracking their progress have been introduced. These are providing staff with a clear understanding of how well students are progressing and enabling potential underachievement to be identified and acted upon at an early stage. This is having a significant impact on the better progress students are now making. Appropriate careers advice and guidance help to ensure students are given suitable information on further and higher education and on employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with good support from the senior leadership team, sets a clear and ambitious direction for the work of the school. Targets for students' progress are appropriately challenging

and these targets are well informed by increasingly accurate assessment information. Senior leaders monitor and evaluate performance effectively across the school and make good use of external support to moderate their judgements. As a result they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has led to the introduction of a number of strategies that have strong potential to raise standards. However, there is considerable inconsistency in the effectiveness of subject leaders. While procedures for monitoring performance are now firmly established in the senior leadership, these are not consistently well implemented at subject level. As a result, some departments are more successfully raising standards than others. Governors are very supportive of the school and proud of its profile in the community. They understand their role as critical friends and are now more challenging in the drive for improvement. Provision for community cohesion is good. A range of activities, particularly through the school's arts provision, engages students with the local community, making full use of the school's facilities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

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 eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Springwell Community School, Staveley, Chesterfield, S43 3NQ

Thank you for welcoming me and my team of inspectors to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and joining you in your lessons.

We found that the school is satisfactory and with a number of good and improving features. Your headteacher, governors and all of the staff at the school do things with your best interests in mind. You enjoy your education and are part of a safe and caring community. The vast majority of you behave well both in lessons and around the school. Your teachers work hard to provide you with lessons that interest you and we have asked the school to make more of your lessons like this. The range of courses available to you, particularly at Key Stage 4, is wider because you are a specialist arts school and because you have close links with other schools and colleges. This ensures that all of you are able to find something suitable for your needs and to prepare you for the future.

Your achievement is satisfactory but it could improve, particularly in English and mathematics. We have asked the school to do all it can to make sure that you all achieve your full potential in the GCSE examinations. Your teachers spend a lot of time marking your work and we have asked them when they do this to make sure that you are given clear guidance on how you can improve. We have also asked that all subject leaders keep a close check on how well you are doing in lessons.

You can help your school and yourself by working hard, following the advice teachers give you and having high expectations about your own capabilities. This applies particularly to those of you who find it difficult to behave as well as you should in lessons.

With best wishes for your future success

Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Lead inspector