

Sir James Smith's Community School

Dark Lane, Camelford, Cornwall, PL32 9UJ

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- Despite improvements in overall achievement in 2012, there remains variability in the outcomes for subjects.
- The whole-school focus on the quality of teaching and learning and emphasis on the progress made by students have not had sufficient time to show a sustained upward trend in students' achievement.
- The progress made by boys in mathematics remains weak and does not demonstrate sufficient improvement over the last two years.
- Lessons do not consistently demonstrate sharply focused activities which match and extend the abilities of all students. There are not enough opportunities for students to engage in the evaluation of their work.
- Senior leaders have only recently developed strategies to evaluate provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs in terms of the impact on attainment and progress.
- The subject leaders appointed over the last few years have developed systems to raise achievement, but this is yet to result in consistent and sustained improvement.
- The governing body has introduced procedures to formally monitor the progress made by students, but these have not yet resulted in sustained improvement in their attainment and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher has worked with determination and resilience to restructure the senior and middle leadership teams with a strong focus on improving teaching and raising achievement.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders is systematic and linked well to the management of teachers' performance.
- Students' behaviour is positive and welcoming. Students are confident and happy in lessons and around the school. Students, and their parents, are clear that they are safe and well cared for.
- Outcomes for the humanities subjects and science are strong.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, of which three were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team. In addition, one inspector undertook a learning walk, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at the evaluation of students' work.
- Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. An inspector also heard some students read.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including data on students' progress, self-evaluation, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding and students' work.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to the on-line Parent View survey during the inspection, together with the results of a recent survey of parents and carers by the school.

Inspection team

Robert Pyner, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Fran Ashworth	Additional inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sir James Smith's Community School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school serves the town of Camelford and the surrounding rural area, with the large majority of students travelling daily by bus.
- Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is about twice the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average. Students' needs include specific learning and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has a specialism in the humanities.
- The school is part of a cooperative trust which includes providers from all phases of education from early years to post 16.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - developing challenging learning activities in lessons which are more closely aligned to the needs of different ability groups
 - developing strategies which involve students more effectively in the evaluation of their work.
- Raise attainment so that by summer 2013 the school at least meets its target for the proportion of students achieving five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics by taking robust action to ensure the continued reduction of the variability in the performance of subjects across the curriculum.
- Accelerate the progress made by students in English and mathematics so that by summer 2013 outcomes are at least in line with national figures for expected progress by:
 - focusing on the progress of boys, particularly in mathematics, and providing interventions where necessary to ensure that activities engage and challenge them
 - developing the strategies for the support of all ability groups, building on the WAVE programme, to provide timely interventions and further involve parents in this process
 - evaluating the impact of provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs and use this information to develop appropriate individual and group programmes of work.
- 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

- The 2012 examination results were a significant improvement on the previous year, which were weak. The latest outcomes for a range of attainment indicators and key subjects show clear improvement, with, for example, the proportion achieving five higher GCSEs including English and mathematics closer to the national average. Examination performance in English and mathematics also improved. This represents the concerted effort across the school to review and develop the use of assessment information and intervention through, for example, the WAVE provision, following the disappointing 2011 results.
- Students' progress throughout their time at the school also showed improvement in the 2012 outcomes, but this is variable across subjects and groups. Students' progress is strong in the humanities subjects and science, with improvement in 2012 in the progress made by boys and girls in English. However, although the range of achievement across subjects has narrowed, school data show that underperformance remains in some curriculum areas.
- The progress of boys in mathematics is significantly below that of girls and national comparators, with little improvement over the last two years.
- Analysis of achievement over time, including school data, shows that the progress of ability groups can be variable, particularly middle and higher ability groups. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve broadly in line with their peers. However, the school is at an early stage in the evaluation of the impact of specific provision in terms of achievement.
- The progress made by students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with this group nationally. School data indicate that interventions using pupil premium funding led to improvements in achievement for Year 11 last year. Generally, however, this funding has been used to enrich the provision across all year groups.
- In the large majority of lessons, students work hard and apply their skills to a range of learning activities, working cooperatively in pairs and groups. They are confident to talk about their learning and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Learning and progress are stronger where activities closely match students' abilities, challenge them to develop their independent learning skills and involve practical tasks.
- In the Parent View responses undertaken as part of the inspection and the recent school survey of parents and carers, there is strong support for the school, with most judging that their children make good progress at the school and, in the school survey, the large majority noting that examination results are positive. The inspection evidence indicates that achievement requires sustained improvement in some areas.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- School data indicate that the quality of teaching has improved over time, supported by the robust system for monitoring undertaken by senior staff and the focused support provided by local authority consultants for English and mathematics.
- The school has improved expectations of students' capabilities through the developing use of assessment data to inform planning. The school uses a common planning format which enables a clear pathway for learning and this is generally well used by teachers to develop an effective pace to lessons. There are clear references to students' prior learning and notes regarding literacy and numeracy elements across subjects.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers use their knowledge of where the students are in their learning to build a succession of activities to develop learning and understanding. A particular strength is the subject knowledge displayed by teachers and, during the inspection, there were some particularly effective examples of questioning which engaged students well. For example, in a good lesson with a Year 10 class working on a set book, students were engaged in developing a commentary of a scene from the text. Through effective questioning, the teacher was able support the students in their critical thinking using inference so that their

commentaries gave a clear description of the scene. Working in pairs, the students then shared their commentaries with the rest of the class, who listened attentively.

- A less effective and widespread element of teaching across the school was the lack of clear activities which are planned to stretch and challenge learners related to their ability. Too many lessons included a single task which all completed, with the more-able students then undertaking an extension activity. This missed opportunities to provide tailored activities to maximise the learning and progress of all ability groups, but particularly the more-able students.
- Students can talk about their work and identify the points for improvement seen in the marked work for formal assessment. However, there is a lack of clear evidence of a real dialogue of assessment with their teachers which engages students fully in their learning.
- Parents are positive about the quality of teaching in the school. Students with special educational needs spoken to by inspectors were generally positive about the quality of teaching and support they receive. Some could explain how they had gained in confidence and developed their skills and understanding through structured intervention strategies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are welcoming, friendly and generally show respect and courtesy to each other, staff and visitors. Students behave well across the extended school site. In classrooms, good relationships lead to the calm learning atmosphere which was seen during the inspection. Students said that there are few interruptions due to poor behaviour, although this can occur and when it does it is generally linked to teaching which does not engage students.
- School records show that behaviour, attendance and punctuality have all improved over the last three years. Exclusion rates are lower than average. There is effective analysis of the data relating to behaviour in order to identify patterns and support individuals whose behaviour may make them vulnerable. The school has clear systems to log any incidents of bullying although the records show low occurrence. The system for dealing with poor behaviour in classrooms involving support assistants and the behaviour manager is effective. As a result of these strong procedures, there has been a steep decline in behaviour-related incidents over the last four years.
- Students who spoke to inspectors highlighted the effective relationships with staff and other students which mean that they feel safe and well cared for. This was very strongly reinforced by parents and carers in both the Parent View survey undertaken as part of the inspection and the recent school survey. Students are aware of the high expectations of behaviour and conduct.
- Effective actions are undertaken to ensure that students understand how all forms of bullying and prejudice can affect their lives. Students report that bullying is rare in school and understand contemporary issues such as homophobic and cyber bullying. They know who they can talk to within the school if they are worried or concerned.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has clear ambition for the school and has worked hard to develop senior and middle leadership, demonstrating the capacity to secure improvement for the school. In the last two years, six subject leaders have been appointed and this, together with the changes to the senior leadership team, is beginning to show in the improved outcomes for 2012. However, the improvements in achievement are variable; senior leaders and governors recognise that the challenge now is to build on positive developments and tackle remaining underperformance to ensure sustained improvement in achievement across the school.
- Systems for monitoring the progress of students and subjects have developed over a number of years and have been instrumental in the improvements seen in the latest school results. Progress tracking information is widely used throughout the school and is a feature of the school's lesson planning format. Subject leaders and teachers are increasingly being held to

account for students' achievement.

- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and development planning sets out appropriate priorities for improvement.
 - There is a clear performance management cycle for teachers, which sets out appropriate accountabilities based on the Teachers' Standards. Professional development for staff is focused on the whole-school improvement programme and the individual teacher's role.
 - The curriculum has been developed since the last inspection and, for a school of this size, is broad and balanced. Students have three pathways from which to choose and, although a range of vocational options is available, there is a relatively small take-up from Year 10 and Year 11 students. The curriculum is supplemented by a range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities that make a clear contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - The school is part of a cooperative trust whose membership includes a range of providers from pre-school to post-16. The focus of the current work is the development of literacy in order to meet the needs of the whole trust community. There are clear links with post-16 providers to ensure smooth transition to this phase of education or training.
 - Feedback from parents is positive; most feel that the school is led and managed well and that they would recommend it to others.
 - The local authority provides effective support for the school, including the teaching of English and mathematics which has improved the quality of provision in these subjects.
 - The school meets all the current requirements for safeguarding.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - the governing body has supported the school through a period of considerable change to strengthen school leadership
 - the regular review of students' progress data at meetings of the governing body has only been introduced relatively recently and as yet is insufficiently embedded in the cycle of review and challenge.
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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	112039
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	401230

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	491
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Holt
Headteacher	Jon Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 November 2009
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