

Sir James Smith's Community School

Dark Lane, Camelford, Cornwall, PL32 9UJ

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- GCSE examination results in some subjects have not been as good as they should be and require improvement.
- Results in GCSE mathematics in particular require improvement. Progress in English has been more rapid than progress in mathematics but not consistently good.
- The most able students do not always make as much progress as they should and so they do not all gain the highest grades in GCSE.
- The school's assessment policies are not applied consistently across all subjects so that students do not always receive good advice about how to make improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's leaders have been determined in raising standards of teaching in order to ensure consistently good progress.
- The governing body has developed its own expertise and can now support the headteacher and senior staff very well to help bring about improvements.
- The standards of teaching seen across the school in all subject areas were confirmed as good. The school has made very good use of the help and support offered to it since the last inspection.
- Improved target setting and tracking methods ensure that teachers know how students are getting on, and additional help can be given where it is needed.
- The school's curriculum offers a good range of subjects to interest all learners.
- The school promotes good behaviour amongst the students. They are keen to learn and respond well to their teachers.
- The school has developed good strategies for managing the behaviour of students so that disruptions to learning are rare.
- The school's work to keep students safe is good.
- The school makes effective use of additional funding to ensure that all students are able to make good progress, in line with similar students.
- The school makes good use of the excellent on-site facilities to encourage participation in sport, music and other activities.
- Students are offered an extensive range of opportunities to engage in activities such as visits.
- Older students make smooth transitions to higher education or training

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 teachers in 23 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and assistant headteacher. In addition, inspectors made some short visits to lessons and looked at the school's provision for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Lessons finished at lunchtime on the first day of the inspection so that academic review meetings could be held between students in Year 11, their parents and tutors. This was a part of the school's normal programme of events. During this time an inspector was able to attend a talk by teachers giving advice to parents, and to have a conversation with some parents to collect information about their views.
- Meetings were held with two members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers, and a representative group of students. An inspector had a conversation with a representative of the local authority. One inspector listened to individual students reading aloud and talked to students about their reading.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, visited an assembly and tutor groups, and looked at samples of students' work. They also looked at progress data, documents about the school's development and evaluation, safeguarding information and records about attendance and behaviour. The records showing the impact of professional development for staff were also examined.
- Inspectors took into account the views of 30 parents who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View). All members of staff were invited to contribute their views in a questionnaire and 31 responses were received and taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Ann Cox, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Patrick Hazlewood

Additional inspector

Sarah Maude-Boss

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sir James Smith's Community School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school roll has fallen over the last four years, reflecting a drop in students of secondary age living locally.
- The school serves the town of Camelford and the surrounding rural area, with the large majority of students travelling from outside the town by bus.
- The school site is adjacent to Camelford Primary School and the Community Sports and Leisure facilities. Adult Education premises are on the same site, and also the administrative office of the local police.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is in line with the national average.
- In Years 7 and 8, nearly a quarter of students benefit from additional help in mathematics and English, funded by the government's catch-up programme.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has received support from Her Majesty's Inspectors since the last full inspection, particularly focused on improving teaching in mathematics.
- The school is part of a cooperative trust known as the Moorland and Coastal Trust, which includes providers from all phases of education from early years to post-16.
- In the last two years the school has received support to help raise standards in mathematics from Pool Academy in Redruth, Cornwall.
- The school has worked hard to establish working partnerships with a wide range of other educational establishments, agencies and groups, including regional universities, local sixth-form providers, Camelford Leisure Centre and Devon and Cornwall Police Authority.
- The school hosts a wide range of local groups including the Trigg Orchestra, with students from two other secondary schools, and the Cornwall Rugby East Division.
- A very small number of older students are educated off site at the North Cornwall Alternative Provision Academy based in Delabole, or the Caradon Alternative Provision Academy based in Liskeard.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen teaching so that:
 - students' progress in English and mathematics improves rapidly
 - more able students are challenged and supported to achieve as highly as they are able
 - the school's assessment policy is applied consistently in all subjects so that students receive clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work, as they are now doing in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has shown dedication and determination in working tirelessly to raise standards throughout the school. He is very well supported by senior staff and members of the Governing Body. The school's senior and middle leaders are highly ambitious for the students of the school; this is conveyed in the motto, 'Aspiration Ambition Achievement'.
- The school has responded positively to the good support given to it in the last two years, including by the local authority. Changes made are bringing about consistent improvements in the quality of teaching and increasing the rate of progress made by students. The school has focused on setting realistic but ambitious targets for students, and it has built new and effective reporting systems around this. These positive changes have resulted in improved progress for most students.
- Parents who attended the review meetings for Year 11 students expressed to inspectors their appreciation for the helpful information and advice which the school communicates to them.
- A detailed and accurate self-evaluation process has led to clear and detailed plans to bring about improvements. All members of staff and governors have contributed to this process. Members of staff are fully supportive of the initiatives and told inspectors, 'We are a school driven to improve' and 'The school has become much more focused.' There is good morale.
- The school provides a varied curriculum which interests students. Older students make choices from a good number of options. Further opportunities are provided, for example by encouraging neighbouring schools to participate in rugby tournaments on the school site, using the excellent sports facilities. Hosting the Trigg orchestra brings together students with an interest in music from the neighbouring schools of Budehaven and Wadebridge.
- The provision of alternative courses for a few students ensures that they are engaged in useful learning. The school liaises closely with the other providers with weekly reports and regular visits by staff responsible to ensuring their progress and welfare.
- Visits to places such as London for a whole year group, and the offer of visits to Europe give scope for students to learn first-hand about other cultures. All students study morality and ethics as a GCSE course. Links with other countries include regular contact with a school in Goa. The school's activities contribute well to the students' academic achievement, their physical well-being and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have developed effective procedures to manage the performance of teachers and other staff. The progression of teachers through their salary scale is closely linked to the expected progress of students. All teachers have targets for teaching and professional development, whereby good performance is rewarded and any underachievement tackled robustly. Governors have a clear overview of the process. Teaching continues to improve because of rigorous checks on performance and the provision of further professional development matched appropriately to the needs of staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governing Body is very well informed about the work of the school through detailed reports from senior leaders, and confidently examines data about the performance of the school compared to others locally and nationally. Governors ensure that they keep their training up to date, for instance in safeguarding and in managing the budget. The Governors' Link Scheme gives members first-hand contact with the school, including with students and teachers. Governors challenge and support the senior leaders effectively. They know about teaching performance and its links to pay and career progression. This has helped to bring about the improvements in teaching and students' progress.
 - Members of the Governing Body are well placed to communicate with members of the local community. They meet all their current statutory duties, including current arrangements for the safeguarding of students. The school manages its financial resource efficiently so that staff and resources are deployed effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Throughout the school and in all activities students show interest and engagement. Students are keen to be successful and this is helping them to make good progress. They have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Students are keen to learn in all subjects and representative students told an inspector that they

particularly enjoy learning in mathematics and science lessons.

- Arriving promptly for lessons, students generally have all the equipment that they need and settle quickly to their learning activities.
- Students are proud of their school, their own work and their achievements. The school buildings and facilities are respected by all users; for example, there was a total absence of litter in the school buildings.
- In lessons students were observed to respond rapidly and positively to the requests of their teachers. Inspectors saw that lessons flow smoothly. Inspectors saw no examples of time being wasted through low-level disruption.
- Students, their parents and school staff all firmly agree that the school provides a very safe environment. Through work-experience programmes and contact with visitors to the school such as local police community support officers, students are aware of the importance of good attitudes and behaviour patterns.
- When moving around the school, students are polite and courteous to each other, to staff and to visitors. Minimal supervision is necessary at lunch and break times as most students are good at self-regulation.
- The school recently introduced a system of using Year 11 prefects to assist in the running of clubs and activities. About a third of the year group applied for the role and it was clear to inspectors that there are mutual benefits; one student talked about the increased confidence he is gaining while learning skills which will be helpful in the workplace.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The school takes active steps to prevent all forms of bullying. There have been few recorded incidents since the previous inspection. Students confirmed that all forms of bullying are rare. They were confident that if it does occur in school, reported incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. An inspector attended an engaging assembly which effectively conveyed to students some of the safety pitfalls involved in using modern communication systems. Students were given clear and practical advice about how they may keep themselves safe.
- The school has a well-developed rewards and celebration system to promote good behaviour. Good behaviour has been a consistent feature of the school over many years, confirmed by the school's records which appropriately log and monitor all incidents.
- Exclusion rates are below the national average, and the sanction is only used when no other course of action is appropriate. The school's inclusion centre is run by experienced and highly trained support staff who use their expertise to help students to return to normal lessons as quickly as possible.
- Attendance at school is good. The rate of persistent absence has declined over the last three years and is low. The school has good systems for following up any patterns of absence and helps to find solutions to problems.
- The school makes sure that all students have equality of opportunity and it actively tackles potential sources of discrimination.
- A very small number of older students attend courses at other centres; their attendance and behaviour are carefully checked, as are all aspects of ensuring their safety and well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- The school has focused on improving the quality of teaching, particularly since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is now consistently good. Good teaching was seen across a range of subjects and in different year groups.
- Although there has been an improvement in the standards of teaching, there has not yet been enough time to see fully the improvements in students' learning and progress, and so GCSE results are not yet good enough.
- The leadership of teaching has been resolute in bringing about improvements. Much time has been invested in ensuring a consistency in approach across all subjects, and in ensuring that students respond positively to their teachers. There was very good agreement about the quality of teaching observed jointly by senior school staff and inspectors.
- In lessons there is evidence of detailed lesson planning and effective tracking of students' progress which contributes to their good learning. Marking and feedback to students are good in most subjects, where students are given clear advice about how they should improve their work to gain higher grades. This is not yet fully embedded practice and there is some inconsistency across subjects. On occasion students do not know how to make their work better, and this can slow down learning.
- Target setting for individual students has been revised so now students are now given aspirational targets

which raise their expectations. The more able students are challenged consistently to achieve highly. A new rewards structure is linked to success, which is regularly celebrated.

- The school has improved methods for identifying those students who are falling behind, and puts in place effective programmes of help to ensure that they catch up.
- Teachers have developed good skills for checking students' understanding, such as through well-directed questions and then reshaping tasks when necessary so that students' learning is secure before they move on.
- Effective attention has been given to ensuring the success of disabled students and those with special educational needs. There is careful assessment of these students' needs and a wide range of strategies to help them. There is effective deployment of teaching assistants who work individually or in small groups with the students.
- The school makes determined efforts to help students develop their skills in literacy. One very effective example was seen in a technology lesson when a teacher encouraged the fun use of technical terms, and emphasised the correct spelling of the terms. Use of the school's library is encouraged for both formal study, and for reading for pleasure. The school has implemented a whole-school focus on writing and reading, led by the English department, and ensures that a common vocabulary and writing process is used across the curriculum.
- Teachers regularly set meaningful homework which is completed well by students. This has a positive impact on students' achievement.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards which are consistently below the national average in both English and mathematics.
- From these starting points, students have generally made below-average progress in mathematics, which requires improvement. Progress in English has been stronger than in mathematics, but it not yet consistently good. Improvements in teaching are now bringing about a rapid improvement in the progress of students throughout the school, but there was insufficient time for this to have made enough impact on older students' progress and attainment in GCSE qualifications.
- In mathematics and English, for instance, the proportion of the most able students who currently make enough progress to achieve GCSE A* or A grades is below the proportion of other students nationally. The school is changing the GCSE entry policy to help maximise the opportunities for all students.
- The school has a well-developed range of strategies to help disadvantaged students entitled to additional funding. In 2013, the gap between students entitled to funding and others in the school was equivalent to about a third of a GCSE grade lower in mathematics, and there was no gap in English. Slightly bigger gaps were seen in the 2012 GCSE results. There are bigger gaps when the school's disadvantaged students are compared to others nationally; in 2013 the gap was about a third of a GCSE grade in English, and three quarters of a GCSE grade in mathematics. Inspectors judged that in lessons currently, students entitled to additional funding were making progress similar to other students in the school.
- The younger students entitled to catch-up funding are given focused help, for example with phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help with reading skills. Students' reading skills are encouraged with a popular library and reading-challenge competitions.
- The school has developed links with local primary schools so that transition work begins early, and the students benefit from very thorough liaison between the schools.
- Students with special educational needs or disabilities are given good support so that they achieve in line with similar students nationally. The students in alternative provision make good progress from their starting points and are able to progress into further training and employment.
- Students are prepared for the next stages of their education and training. Almost all proceed to further training or education, with a high proportion attending sixth-form centres in the county, despite the long journeys involved.

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	431666

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	444
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Holt
Headteacher	Jon Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 September 2012
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