

South Bromsgrove Community High School

Charford Road, Bromsgrove, B60 3NL

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school because:

- All groups of students make excellent progress, regardless of their background or ability level. Attainment in Years 11 and 13 is high.
- Teaching is outstanding. Lessons are planned very well to motivate students while demanding hard work. They are packed with interesting activities and run at a rapid pace.
- Teachers are highly skilled, ambitious practitioners who know students well and carefully adapt work so all groups make the best possible progress.
- Just occasionally, marking does not show students exactly how to improve their work even further.
- Students are calm, mature and behave outstandingly well. Bullying and racism are virtually unknown.
- Students' universally positive relationships with one another and staff promote consistently excellent learning.
- The outstanding range of subjects and courses includes many memorable experiences, greatly enriched by exceptional arts provision and the largest Duke of Edinburgh school-based centre in the country.
- The headteacher brings inspiration and a powerful sense of direction to leaders, managers and staff. The entire staff team show great commitment to providing the best possible opportunities for every student.
- Senior staff and members of the governing body undertake regular checks on all aspects of school life, providing a very clear picture. They then take quick, effective action to address any areas of concern and make sure the school keeps on improving.
- The sixth form is outstanding, displaying similar strengths to the rest of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work, and looked at a range of documents including its policies and assessment records.
- Inspectors observed 47 lessons taught by 44 teachers over almost 20 hours. Meetings were held with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 122 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as a recent survey conducted by the school to establish parental views.

Inspection team

John Carnaghan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Young	Additional Inspector
Philip Winch	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Hawkes	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- South Bromsgrove Community High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium support (additional money allocated to schools by the government for looked after students, those from families in the services and others known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- Almost all students speak English as their first language; very few come from a minority ethnic heritage.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- Alternative provision offers a few students additional work-related courses away from the school site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the effectiveness of teaching by ensuring that all marking of students' work includes crystal-clear advice on areas for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of students is outstanding

- The school has maintained high standards of attainment for many years. This year's very strong GCSE and A-level results were even better, and well above average at the end of both Years 11 and 13. Leaders and managers are alert to any variations in attainment and act vigorously to address any problems. For example, those receiving additional funds under the pupil premium receive well-judged extra help and this has closed the gap in achievement between this group and other students.
- Highly effective teaching, which constantly focuses on driving students' progress, promotes outstanding learning in lessons. For example, in an excellent Year 10 history lesson the teacher used numerous interesting activities to ensure students consolidated their understanding of the origins of the First World War. Perceptive questioning encouraged students to share their knowledge and, working together, they made excellent progress in developing their understanding of the fundamental causes of the conflict.
- Outstanding teaching combines with students' enthusiasm for learning to promote outstanding progress. The high quality and consistency of teaching ensures that there are only very minor variations in progress between subjects. Should anomalies start to emerge, rigorous action by leaders and managers soon addresses any concerns.
- The school has coordinators to promote the development of students' skills in literacy and numeracy across all subjects. This is well organised and makes a significant contribution to maintaining very high standards in English and mathematics across the school. Many teachers use computers to promote learning, ensuring outstanding progress in information and communication technology.
- The school is careful to make sure that all students are included equally in learning, including those needing extra help who are supported on school action or action plus. Staff work most effectively to develop a clear understanding of each student's needs, adapting what these students study to maximise their opportunities to do well. As a result, these and all other groups of students also make excellent progress.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Consistently high-quality teaching promotes excellent progress across the school. Many lessons are outstanding. The variety and pace of activities are often breathtaking, keeping all students fully engaged.
- Teachers set very high expectations in lessons. They set challenging yet achievable goals in lesson introductions and then provide the means for all students to succeed. For example, Year 9 English students carried out an expert analysis of the use of language in the story being studied because the teacher had prepared them fully in advance.
- Teachers question students most perceptively, subtly consolidating previous learning and addressing any gaps in understanding before launching enthusiastically into new work. Students are expected to answer questions in detail, promoting their deeper understanding.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge promotes assured teaching and students' confidence; it helps teachers maintain a tight focus both on lesson aims and the requirements of examinations.

Lesson planning is outstanding, and the stimulating activities are supported by high-quality, interesting resources and tasks that are adapted well to stretch students of all abilities.

- Warm, constructive relationships pervade classrooms; disruption of any kind is virtually unknown. Courtesy is the norm and students enjoy numerous opportunities for pair, group and independent work. Students show a strong desire to learn and teachers successfully satisfy this.
- Students benefit from clear individual targets to aim for in their work, but marking of books does not always reflect these or provide clear advice on improvement.

The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding

- Students' attitudes to school are exemplary. Behaviour is calm, mature and considerate. Warm relationships contribute to the exceptionally positive climate for learning both in and out of lessons. The well-conceived school behaviour policy rarely needs to be used.
- Improvements in behaviour have reduced exclusions to a very low level. Rigorous practices to improve attendance have been effective and by all measures, attendance is above average.
- Parents and carers, staff and students are universally positive about behaviour. Students report that bullying of any kind is very rare and dealt with thoroughly if any hints of such behaviour appear. Students are aware of the perils of cyber bullying. At their request they can use mobile phones in certain areas during breaks. The well-placed trust the school shows in students is rarely abused, so there are no known incidents of bullying by text or through the internet.
- Students and parents correctly report that the school is a very safe place.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The ambition, commitment and creativity of the headteacher are fully shared by his capable, committed team of leaders and managers.
- Comprehensive checks on students' progress through analysing assessment information enable all staff to keep a close eye on how each student is progressing. Actions are then taken to give additional help to students who need it. Assessment information is also used to challenge staff to ensure their efforts promote the best possible progress.
- Groups at risk of underachieving receive help that is exceptionally well matched to their individual needs. Students enjoy a wide range of help, including physical, academic and pastoral support; for example, expert teaching ensures students who lack fine handwriting skills are quickly taught how to write legible, cursive script. The school's splendid attention to detail ensures there is no discrimination and equality of opportunity for all.
- Teaching is subject to systematic checks. Highly-skilled teachers share good practice and promote general improvements. Teachers across the school are involved in checking each other's practice; this is thoroughly coordinated by senior leaders, so teaching quality is very consistent.
- The school has a very good reputation for helping staff to develop their skills and there are numerous ways in which teachers can improve their capabilities. A regular teaching and learning newsletter promotes best practice.

- Annual target-setting for teachers uses assessment and other checks to promote best practice. Teachers' pay is closely linked to their success in promoting good progress and delivering excellent lessons, particularly in relation to school priorities such as closing achievement gaps between different groups of students.
- An enormously wide but well-balanced range of subjects and courses is one of the great strengths in this exceptional school. This combines with the dedication and perseverance of staff to ensure all students can savour success. It caters for the needs of all students and provides good academic and work-related opportunities. The excellent provision for sports has already produced one Olympic athlete.
- Alternative provision that offers a few students additional work-related courses away from the school site is well run, and produces similarly high results to the on-site courses. The school has a well-planned early entry policy for GCSE English and mathematics; outstanding achievement in these subjects confirms its effectiveness.
- The arts have a very high status in the school. Three choirs, each of over 200 students, compete in the annual school 'Eisteddfod' competition. The extensive Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme involves over half of the staff (including all senior staff) and nearly half the students in the three levels of accreditation. It brings numerous benefits in terms of students' confidence, physical development and positive relationships, as well as improving staff bonding and morale.
- Students enjoy many opportunities to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. A recent school conference included representatives from a number of religions and cultures to discuss these areas. The rich diversity of the taught subjects broadens students' horizons with numerous international links. For example, students have raised over £30,000 to help with the building of a school in Tanzania.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body plays a significant role in driving school improvement. In-depth monitoring provides its well-trained members with an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and how well it compares to other schools, particularly in terms of the quality of teaching. The depth of their understanding ensures that they offer full support to leaders, managers and staff while demanding the very best from them. Governors have a very firm grasp of performance management. Their creative input into the priorities for individual staff, including the headteacher, helps develop teaching and drive the school forwards. Current performance management priorities are sharply focused. For example, all teachers must identify 10 students they teach who face barriers to learning and demonstrate how their work has boosted these students' progress. This initiative is closing the gap in progress between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers. The governing body monitors the spending of the pupil premium carefully; its members check carefully on the impact of the additional support this funding provides, ensuring it effectively promotes equality of opportunity and helps to raise achievement. The governors are very thorough in their efforts to make the school a safe place. Safeguarding procedures and practices meet current national requirements.

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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	116929
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	403303

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of students in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1343
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Cooper
Headteacher	Paul Topping
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2007
Telephone number	01527 831783
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