

The Sholing Technology College

Middle Road, Sholing, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 8PH

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- By the time they leave school, pupils achieve outcomes in English, mathematics and science that are below those achieved by pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is improving, but is inconsistent. As a result, not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve well enough. However, the differences between their outcomes and those of other pupils nationally are getting smaller.
- Not enough teaching provides the level of challenge needed to enable pupils to make rapid progress in their learning.
- Pupils' performance in different subjects varies widely. This is because of inconsistent subject leadership.
- Some pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, do not attend school regularly enough.
- When teaching does not meet their needs, some pupils lose concentration and distract others from their work.
- Actions taken to improve governance have been too slow. The interim executive board has not been in place long enough to have had an impact on the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and his senior team have been tireless in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Where teaching is effective, teachers take account of what pupils already know and give them work to do which is interesting and challenging. As a result, pupils work hard and make strong progress in their learning.
- Leaders are highly effective in their efforts to ensure that pupils are safe. Bullying is rare. Pupils feel safe and know they can speak to teachers if they have any worries.
- The school makes strong provision for pupils' personal development and welfare.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the progress of which they are capable by the time they leave the school.
- Share existing good practice, so that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently strong across the school.
- Tackle any remaining inconsistencies in the quality of subject leadership.
- Improve rates of attendance for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are in line with national averages.
- Quickly strengthen the role of the recently established interim executive board in driving further improvement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- When the school was last inspected, leadership and management were judged to be inadequate. Leadership and management are no longer inadequate, but inconsistencies remain, particularly in relation to pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the impact of subject leadership.
- The headteacher provides determined and effective leadership. He has overseen the recovery of the school during the last two years, bringing clarity and a renewed sense of purpose to the whole school community. He has not shied away from making difficult decisions in the interests of pupils' achievement. As a result, teachers' expectations have risen and current pupils' outcomes, particularly in the lower years, are beginning to improve.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils make enough progress in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. By the time they leave school, pupils' outcomes overall are below average. In 2016, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, made progress well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have not yet secured consistently strong teaching. This is because the quality of subject leadership is too variable. Where subject leadership is less effective, teaching does not take enough account of pupils' needs and evaluations of the quality of teaching are too generous. Consequently, pupils make slower progress in their learning. Where subject leadership is stronger, for example in humanities, mathematics, art and languages, expectations are high and teachers know what is expected of them. Pupils do well because teaching is challenging and well matched to their needs.
- Until very recently, teachers were not held to account strongly enough for the progress their pupils make. Teachers were deemed to have met their targets even though pupils made progress below that found nationally. This year, the headteacher has strengthened the arrangements for evaluating teachers' work. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this revised approach.
- Additional funding to improve rates of progress for disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has not yet led to rapid enough improvements in published outcomes for these pupils. Leaders have improved the ways in which these additional funds are used. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the lower years are performing in line with the targets they have been set.
- Leaders make more effective use of funding for pupils in Year 7 who need additional support in English and mathematics than they did in previous years. As a result, pupils in the lower years who have fallen behind in English and mathematics are beginning to catch up with their peers.
- Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum. In the lower years, pupils study the full national curriculum. Once they reach key stage 4, pupils are sensibly guided into pathways of study that enable them to follow the academic or vocational courses that best meet their needs and abilities. Leaders have also made sure that pupils benefit

from and enjoy a range of clubs and educational visits.

- Staff morale is high. Staff say that the headteacher supports them well and that he values their work. They appreciate the changes he has made, which they say have improved teaching, assessment and behaviour. Teachers benefit from regular training that helps them to improve their classroom skills.
- Pupils receive well-planned and timely careers advice that gives them accurate information about next steps and encourages them to aim high. Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, take part in workshops at the University of Southampton. They also receive support with their studies from university graduates.
- The headteacher and his senior team promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. In assemblies, pupils reflect on topical moral issues. In English and drama, they learn about our literary heritage and explore their own and others' feelings. In physical education, they work in teams to achieve shared aims. In humanities, they learn about different religions, cultures and important historical events.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Leaders take their responsibilities under equalities legislation seriously and ensure that pupils learn to understand and celebrate diversity. Similarly, leaders ensure that pupils understand and act in accordance with British values. Pupils know right from wrong and play their part in creating a culture of respect. Consequently, pupils are tolerant of those who are different from themselves and reject all forms of prejudice.
- The headteacher has made skilful use of external support from the local authority and other schools to improve aspects of the school's work, in particular in leadership development and self-evaluation.

Governance of the school

- Although beyond the school's control, the process of establishing an interim executive board (IEB) has been too slow. The IEB was eventually formed in May 2017, one year after the previous inspection report had judged governance to be ineffective.
- The chair of the recently formed IEB is experienced and has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has ensured that governors have the range and depth of skills needed to hold leaders properly to account. However, she also acknowledges that the IEB needs additional members, and she is taking firm action to secure this.
- Governors offer robust challenge to leaders, for example on the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have identified the right priorities. They take their statutory responsibilities seriously, including for safeguarding. They check what leaders tell them by visiting to see the school at work, taking the opportunity to talk to staff and pupils. However, it is too early to judge the impact of governors' work on standards and progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have successfully created a warm, nurturing culture in which pupils' welfare has a high priority.
- All required checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out with exceptional attention to detail. Staff receive regular training on child protection. They know what signs to look for and what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's well-being.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has completed the appropriate high-level training needed for the role. Processes within the school for identifying pupils who may be at risk of harm are highly effective. Consequently, vulnerable pupils and their families receive the timely support they need. The DSL has built strong relationships with a range of external agencies. She challenges forcefully any decisions by social services that she believes to be wrong and she is tenacious in following up all referrals.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They know about online safety and they have been taught how to protect themselves from cyber bullying or online grooming. Pupils trust their teachers and say that there is someone they can talk to if they are worried about themselves or a friend.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is no longer inadequate. However, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, too many pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Where teaching is less effective, expectations are too low. In these cases, teachers' planning does not take enough account of what pupils already know and can do. The work is either too hard or too easy. When teachers do have high expectations, they make careful use of assessment information to plan work which stretches and challenges their pupils. For example, in drama Year 9 pupils were thoroughly engrossed in creating an improvised performance based on a true story. The pupils tackled issues of depression, loneliness and loss with great maturity because the task was challenging and built well on their previous learning.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils, in particular the most able, with enough stretch and challenge. Questioning does not probe pupils' understanding thoroughly enough and misconceptions go unchallenged. However, where teaching is effective, teachers' skilful questioning enables pupils to make rapid progress in their learning. For example, the teacher's deft use of questioning coupled with clear explanations helped Year 11 pupils understand a tricky aspect of Spanish grammar.
- In some cases, teachers do not follow the school's assessment policy. When this is the case, pupils do not get the feedback they need to improve their work and are unable to learn from their mistakes. However, for the most part, pupils get precise feedback on their next steps and are given the time to act on this feedback. Pupils confirm that most of their teachers give them helpful advice on how to improve their work.
- In the majority of cases, relationships in classrooms are strong. Pupils respect their

teachers, enjoy learning and work as hard as they can. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson the teacher created a studious environment in which pupils could play close attention to the development of their skills. In a small number of cases, however, pupils talk when their teacher is talking and distract others from their work.

- Parents get regular, clearly presented information on how well their children are doing and on how hard they are trying. The school's own parental survey found that 80% of parents now feel that they get helpful information about their child's progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Teachers generously offer pupils a wide range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. As well as many lunchtime and after-school clubs, pupils benefit from various team sports and cultural events. For example, a group of most-able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, sang with gusto in a workshop as part of an exciting project with the Welsh National Opera.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are taught how to keep themselves safe from a range of everyday risks, including online crime. Pupils know how to report cyber bullying or any attempts to obtain personal information from them. Pupils say they trust their teachers and feel able to talk to them if they are worried about anything.
- Pupils say that there is much less bullying than there used to be. When bullying does occur, they say that teachers are quick to respond and resolve it. Leaders' records confirm that incidents of bullying have declined sharply and are now rare.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They believe that their school is a tolerant community that welcomes people from all backgrounds, religions and sexual orientations. They understand why all forms of discrimination are wrong.
- Pupils are proud of their school and wear their uniforms smartly. They are polite to visitors and talk positively about their learning. The site is free from litter and graffiti.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- For the most part, behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are hard-working and respectful in lessons and they move sensibly between lessons. At break and lunchtimes, they mix together well.
- The school's own survey of parents' views found that over 90% of those surveyed believe that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved since last year, but that some lessons are still disrupted by misbehaviour. Inspectors found that in a small number of cases, pupils did not pay attention to their teachers and slowed the pace of learning for other pupils.
- Exclusions rose last year as leaders brought in a firmer approach to misbehaviour.

However, since the start of the new school year, the rate of exclusions has fallen sharply.

- Attendance is just below the national average for secondary schools. Teachers impress upon pupils the importance of being in school every day. Records show that attendance is improving. Leaders work hard with families and with the local authority to improve the attendance of those pupils who are frequently absent. However, too many disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not come to school regularly enough.
- A small number of pupils attend a local pupil referral unit where they receive specialist support for their behaviour and attendance, which are improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although published outcomes remain below national averages, pupils currently in the school are making stronger progress. Therefore, outcomes overall are improving and are no longer inadequate.
- Published outcomes for 2016 show that while pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and a range of subjects was in line with national averages, their progress was below average. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made progress that was well below that made by other pupils nationally.
- In science, pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, made progress that was well below national averages.
- In the majority of subjects, the progress of the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, was broadly average.
- A legacy of weaker teaching over time means that pupils who took their GCSE examinations in 2017 had too many gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Consequently, provisional results for 2017 suggest that pupils' progress in English, mathematics and a range of subjects will be below national averages. However, early indications are that disadvantaged pupils may have made faster progress from their starting points than they did last year.
- Current pupils in Years 7 to 9 are making more rapid progress, particularly in mathematics, humanities, languages, and art. This is because the curriculum in these subjects helps pupils to develop secure knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils have mastered the basics before moving on to more difficult work.
- Leaders are keenly aware that in previous years the progress of disadvantaged pupils has been too slow. Leaders have taken account of research evidence to place a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching that these pupils receive. Leaders' own assessment information and work in books demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils are now beginning to catch up with other pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has identified accurately the pupils who need support. He has provided teachers with high-quality information about each pupil's barriers to learning with advice on how to overcome these barriers. Teaching assistants are well trained in providing specific interventions. Consequently, most

current pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, in particular those in the lower years, are making similar rates of progress to all pupils.

- Some pupils, in particular low- and middle-prior-attaining boys, have weak literacy skills. Their spelling, grammar and punctuation are below the standard expected for their age and their presentation of work is often untidy. Leaders and teachers have begun to address this by making more effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding. They also promote reading vigorously. For example, all pupils in key stage 3 read silently for 20 minutes a day. Pupils who enter the school with weak literacy and numeracy skills now catch up more quickly than they used to. By the end of year 7 last year, the majority of pupils made strong progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A small number of pupils attend a local pupil referral unit for support with their behaviour and attendance. They follow an appropriate curriculum and achieve outcomes in line with the targets set for them.
- Pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps in education. Pupils are ambitious for their future and are well informed about options available to them. Nearly all pupils move on to further education, work-based training or employment by the time they leave school.

School details

Unique reference number	116451
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10035646

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	952
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Benham
Headteacher	Martin Brown
Telephone number	02380 448861
Website	www.sholingtc.org.uk
Email address	info@sholingtc.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Sholing Technology College is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- A small number of pupils in key stage 4 attend alternative provision at Compass School to support them with their behaviour and attendance.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection began as a special measures monitoring visit, which was then 'deemed' to be a section 5 inspection. Inspectors judged that the school no longer required special measures because leaders have demonstrated the capacity to improve, and the school provides an acceptable standard of education.
- Inspectors observed learning in 45 lessons, in the majority of cases accompanied by members of the school's leadership team.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with senior leaders to discuss various aspects of the school's work.
- Arrangements for safeguarding were evaluated.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils, and spoke informally to pupils at break and lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff and subject leaders to seek their views.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and two members of the interim executive board.
- The lead inspector made telephone calls to a senior officer at Southampton City Council and to the headteacher of Compass School.
- Inspectors reviewed a sample of pupils' work in order to evaluate their progress over time.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by examining summaries of parental surveys carried out by the school during the course of 2016/17.
- A number of documents were reviewed, including the school improvement plan, pupils' progress information, records of behaviour and bullying incidents and minutes of meetings held by the interim executive board.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Emma Sanderson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Rodin	Ofsted Inspector

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