

Southall School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123631
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	380698
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ewen MacLeod
Headteacher	Jo Burdon
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2009
School address	Off Rowan Avenue Dawley Telford TF4 3PX
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alan Lemon

Additional inspector

Alan Jones

Additional inspector

Kate Robertson

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 16 lessons involving 12 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at important school policies, the school's self-evaluation and data on students' attainment and progress. Inspectors scrutinised 77 parental questionnaires as well as questionnaires completed by staff and students.

Information about the school

The school provides education for students who have a statement of special educational needs. Almost all students are of White British heritage and a few are looked after children. Overall, students' educational needs are wide in their variety and some are complex. The majority have moderate learning difficulties and in addition to this one third of students have an autistic spectrum condition. Small but increasing proportions of students have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties or severe learning difficulties.

The school has Healthy School Status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school whose ethos and values ensure it is focused on continually improving how it meets the needs of students and promotes equality of opportunity. The headteacher has high expectations of the staff and gives them clear direction on the way forward. She has a systematic strategy for the performance management of staff which is improving teaching and developing teachers' knowledge and skills in effective ways to support students to learn and make progress. The school is not good because of the variable quality of teaching and its impact on achievement.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in developing a broad range of knowledge and skills, particularly in communication, literacy and language. Curriculum developments give a sharp focus in Years 7 and 8 to students acquiring effective learning skills. In Key Stage 4, the improvement made by extending the range of accreditation has meant students achieve considerably more at levels reflecting their different capabilities.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Support for students and good relationships between them and adults ensure students are engaged in learning and enjoy their work. However, in some lessons, expectations and challenge are not sufficient for students. There is some over-reliance on worksheets, reducing opportunities for students to work independently. Occasionally work is not matched to students' different abilities.
- Students' behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students enjoy each other's company, have regard to each other's needs and are helpful to each other.
- Leaders are improving teaching but the good practice being promoted is not fully established in all lessons. While leaders are clear on the need for a robust system for tracking students' progress to manage school performance, and are developing the means for this, it is not yet established and so restricts the

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extent to which leaders can monitor and evaluate progress.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further by:
 - significantly reducing the amount of worksheets given to students to avoid these lowering the expectations for students and the challenge of their work
 - ensuring all teachers plan lessons with a range of work and activities matched closely to the different abilities of students in every class
 - increasing the opportunities for students to learn independently.

- Improve the rigour of leaders' self-evaluation by:
 - consolidating an effective system for tracking students' progress over time in order to analyse the performance of individual students and groups of students.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Inspectors judged progress to be satisfactory, which differs from the view of the great majority of parents and carers that their children make good progress. Learning mostly gets off to a good start in lessons as a result of lively, well-planned activities engaging students and creating a good pace for learning. At the beginning of lessons, time is often well spent on students recalling what they have learnt in earlier lessons. In English, Year 9 students recalled the difference between a fact and an opinion and Year 11 students gained a great deal of motivation by taking part in a listening game and sharpening their listening skills. In both these instances, students went on to make good progress in literacy as they were required to use their knowledge and skills in challenging ways.

Often, the good pace of learning is not sustained throughout lessons because further work is not as challenging. In some lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, the excessive use of worksheets reduces challenge. Although these help students develop and improve basic skills in reading, writing and number, they restrict students' scope for applying these skills in solving problems and developing their writing creatively and imaginatively. The scope of this work also limits the impact of the otherwise good level of adult support for learning and opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.

All students have a lesson at the start of each day devoted to improving their basic skills in reading, writing and number. This is appropriate and gives opportunities in

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subsequent lessons for students to use and develop the skills learnt. However, in some lessons the limited extent to which work is adapted to students' different abilities adversely affects their rate of progress. When teaching is effective opportunities are provided to reinforce the link between sounds and letters, for pupils to read out the lesson objective and any reading to be shared with the class. Every day pupils spend time reading and they choose from books that are extending their reading skills. Pupils who need additional support to read work with the teacher or teaching assistant which ensures they develop their skills in reading words and understanding their meaning.

Learning involving a significant element of practical activity such as physical education, art and food technology is consistent in providing good challenges for the range of students and in these subjects progress is good. Year 7 students quickly learnt key skills in holding and moving with a hockey stick as a result of excellent coaching. With well-planned and expert food technology teaching, they understood the task of preparing a sauce and accomplished this independently.

While the variation in the quality of learning and progress occurs across the school, it is less of a feature in Key Stage 4 where coursework requirements in the range of accreditation offered, particularly in GCSE, dictate greater scope for students' own work and challenges them. More-able students, mainly those with moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum conditions, make good progress in improving their writing. In Year 11 this includes well-written evaluations of the characters and plot in stories and plays as well as carefully drafted letters. Attainment is low but is rapidly improving as a result of the significant expansion of accreditation in Key Stage 4 and students' increasing success in achieving this accreditation. Scrutiny of their results in 2011 shows that the few Year 11 students who are looked children attained more than most others in their year.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers believe their children are well taught and students share this view. However, it is not the case that students are always well taught as teaching is satisfactory overall. While frequently good, teaching varies in quality across the school, even though leaders have done much to improve teaching. The relationship between students and staff is good and this serves students well in improving self-confidence and their regard for others. In their good management of students, staff promote the school's positive ethos and values and this has a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Teaching benefits from a good level of professional development for teachers together with leaders' clear expectations on what constitutes a good lesson. However, everything that is being learnt about planning and teaching approaches is not always well established and having the desired effect on raising achievement. In lessons where this does make an impact, teaching is lively and engaging so that students enjoy and make good efforts with their work. A very well-planned mathematics lesson for Year 7 students made sure work matched the wide range in

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abilities. Students were given a very good understanding of what they needed to achieve which helped give a fast pace to learning. A well-balanced mix of questioning, practical work in groups and support from teaching assistants led to outstanding achievement in knowing the properties of two-dimensional shapes.

In a significant minority of lessons, the planned curriculum is not so well matched to students' abilities to the extent that more-able students are sometimes not challenged by the work. Often this is because the activity is not adapted for the range in students' abilities, even though support is carefully planned and often effective in making learning possible for students with autistic spectrum disorders and other needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students enjoy school and attendance is above average. Improvements in the breadth, relevance and interest of the curriculum have a positive impact on students' attitudes to school and their behaviour. Staff manage behaviour effectively through good relationships with students supported by the well-understood system of rewards and sanctions.

The majority of students, parents and carers are accurate in their views that behaviour is good and also that bullying is rare in any form. When it happens it is mostly verbal in nature, very occasionally it is physical between boys in play and is well dealt with by the school. In lessons, students are attentive and enjoy the opportunities to contribute and be helpful. They work well together and help each other, often without prompting. They are keen to take on responsibilities such as serving on the school council or as playground buddies. In both these roles students understand clearly what is expected of them. Students speak convincingly of feeling safe, a view shared by parents and carers, and they are kept safe in school. In Key Stage 4, in preparation for leaving school, the curriculum increases the focus on students knowing how to stay safe. Personal, social and health education and courses including topics on personal development improve students' understanding of substance abuse, safety on the roads when travelling and their responsibility for their own and others' safety.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher sets high expectations and a clear direction; a result of which is that the school has experienced and continues to experience a concerted drive for improvement. The governing body supports school leadership with its substantial experience and expertise. It adds strength to the school's ambitions through close involvement, robust challenge and rigorous fulfilment of its duties. The staff work together effectively achieving the school's aims, an example of which has been the impact on improving students' behaviour.

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The school's determination to raise achievement and improve provision in line with changing students' needs strengthens its promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Teachers and support staff have been recruited and developed with skills and expertise to meet the increasing range of students' special educational needs. The arrangements for safeguarding students are effective.

The school has sufficient capacity to sustain further improvement. The tracking and analysis of students' progress is being improved, although the systems being developed are not operating as efficiently as leaders would like. They are sufficient in seeing the progress made by individual students but not by groups of students continuously over time except at the end of Key Stage 4. The school does not currently carry out its own assessment on Year 7 students when they join to confirm their attainment on entry.

Leaders have gone further in making the curriculum relevant to prepare students for the future and strengthening this through new school partnerships and college links. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is promoted satisfactorily and the curriculum makes a good contribution to promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students' knowledge is promoted through art and food technology in particular where they have experience of different cultures from around the world. Their work shows their enjoyment and that they improve their understanding and interest in different people's outlook. The broader curriculum through which good behaviour and safety is encouraged contributes to students' good social development and understanding of right and wrong.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Southall School, Telford, TF4 3PX

Thank you for your warm welcome and for being helpful when we visited your school. Many thanks also to the students who talked to an inspector about their work and the school. Your school is satisfactory and the staff are working very hard to make it a good school.

These are some of its good features.

- You like school and enjoy lessons.
- You behave well and feel safe in school because you are friendly and helpful towards each other.
- Your progress is satisfactory and as more students in Year 11 pass examinations it is getting better.
- Teaching is good in some of your lessons but not all of them.

For the school to improve further I have asked the headteacher to:

- reduce the amount of worksheets you are given and make sure your work is challenging and suits your abilities
- provide a good means for staff to keep a close eye on your progress to make sure you are always making as much progress as possible.

You can contribute by continuing to behave well, being helpful to each other and working hard. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Lemon
Lead inspector

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