

South Camden Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100051
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	354794
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Metcalf

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	832
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Hoffbrand
Headteacher	Rosemary Leeke
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2007
School address	Charrington Street Camden London NW1 1RG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 38 lessons taught by 37 teachers across all subjects. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and students. Inspectors looked at a wide range of data and documentation including the school development plan, school policies, assessment data, safeguarding documentation and the governing body minutes. The responses to questionnaires completed by staff, students and 21 parents and carers were analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which evidence supports the school's judgment about attainment and progress, especially for Black African and Bangladeshi students.
- Whether the quality of teaching is securing sufficient progress and learning for all students across all subjects.
- The impact of the specialist status on learners' outcomes and how well the specialism permeates the work of the school and the community.
- How well students are inducted into the sixth form, make progress on their chosen programmes and achieve their learning goals.

Information about the school

South Camden Community School is an average-sized comprehensive school located in the St Pancras and Somers Town area of London. A significant proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is high with a large majority of Bangladeshi and Black African (predominantly Somali) students. Most students speak English as an additional language and the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well above the national average. Mobility is high with approximately one sixth of the students joining the school after September in Year 7. The school was awarded visual and performing arts specialist status in 2004 and is presently involved in an extensive rebuilding and refurbishment programme which will be completed in 2013. The school's accreditations include Healthy Schools, Sportmark, Leading Parent Partnership award and International Schools 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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

South Camden Community School provides a satisfactory standard of education for students. Under the resolute leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, the school has continued to secure improvements in levels of achievement by developing teachers' classroom practice, supporting students' literacy skills and making better use of data to accurately identify and increasingly reduce underperformance. There have been substantial improvements in provision since the previous inspection when the school was found to be offering a satisfactory education with some good aspects. Improvements, although slow at first, have accelerated rapidly with notable successes in the latest confirmed external examination results.

Students enjoy school and their achievement is satisfactory. The school's detailed analysis of data confirms there are now increasingly secure improvements in attainment and progress with attainment improving rapidly. Attainment for the last three years has been low, but indicators from school data and inspection evidence show that students in the current Year 11 are on track to achieve broadly average levels of attainment. Improvements in English and mathematics have been particularly evident while management changes in science are beginning to impact positively on attainment and progress.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Bangladeshi and Black African students make similar progress and they are well supported in developing their literacy and oracy skills.

Students feel safe and value the care, guidance and support offered by the school. Their behaviour is good and they are very proud of and committed to the school and the community. They speak positively of the opportunities that they have to take responsibility through, for example, the school council and a wide range of committees covering behaviour for learning, healthy schools, and learning and achievement. Outside school, students take on roles as sports leaders in local primary schools and are actively involved in community projects ranging from supporting the Somers Town Community Centre to sharing good practice about sustainability with local schools, businesses and community groups.

Students confirm that they have a strong voice in decisions relating to their learning and well-being, for example, through consultations on school uniform and a greater range of physical activities for girls. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good, with particular strengths in their cultural development.

Attendance is improving significantly and is now above average with a marked decrease in the number of persistent absences. The extent to which students develop skills contributing to their future economic well-being is satisfactory. Students demonstrate

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good personal qualities, such as teamwork and problem solving, but their basic skills remain underdeveloped in spite of the school's rigorous focus on raising levels of literacy. Careers and option pathways are very well supported through careers/option talks and work experience.

The quality of teaching is good as a result of the school's relentless focus on learning and progress. Relationships between staff and students are strong and teachers know their students well, as evidenced in the detailed lesson summaries seen during the inspection. Behaviour management is good and planning makes very good use of data but does not always cater sufficiently for the spread of ability in the class or challenge all students. Assessment and tracking systems are robust but day-to-day marking and assessment are variable across the school and within departments. The school enjoys positive relationships with parents and carers who speak highly of the school and regularly attend progress reviews and subject evenings. The 'Parents and Friends' group meets regularly to discuss their children's learning, as well as subjects, such as internet safety, revision techniques and science support. The school's excellent engagement with parents and carers has been externally recognised through the prestigious Leading Parent Partnership award.

Leadership and management are good and the headteacher and senior staff have a shared commitment to improvement which is appreciated and understood by the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and students. The development of middle managers has added a further level of support. Staff, at all levels, have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a result of their analysis of the school's extensive data, regular surveys and frequent reviews. Recommendations raised in the last inspection report have all been decisively acted upon. The school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Raise attainment further so that, in GCSE and equivalent examinations in 2012, it is at least in line with the national average in all subjects by:
 - improving teaching so that by the spring of 2012, at least 80% of lessons are good or better
 - ensuring that all lessons take account of the spread of ability and offer an appropriate challenge to students of all abilities
 - improving marking so that all teachers provide students with frequent subject-specific guidance on how to take the next steps in learning.
- Support the efforts of the science department to raise attainment and progress to match that currently seen in English and mathematics across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment on entry to the school is low. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Learning and progress are satisfactory and improving rapidly as the result of improved teaching, better data and swift action to remedy underperformance. In most lessons observed, the

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quality of learning was at least satisfactory and often it was better. Students demonstrate dedication and devotion to their work, as evidenced in a Year 9 science lesson where students showed engagement and commitment as a result of the confident teaching.

Lesson observations, students' work and school data offer convincing evidence that learning and progress are improving securely and quickly with a marked improvement in attainment confirmed by the early results from external examinations. Students are keen to learn and work well in pairs or in groups where they develop their skills collaboratively.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as Bangladeshi, Black African and those joining the school after September in Year 7 make similar progress to other students in the school as a consequence of personalised provision and the support offered to develop their literacy skills. For example, in a Year 8 personal, social and health education lesson on street safety, students with weak literacy skills were actively encouraged, by the teacher and other students, to read out loud, offer feedback and answer questions.

Students enjoy school and feel safe. Behaviour is good and exclusion rates have been significantly reduced. Students are well aware of the importance of healthy eating and they demonstrate commitment in their physical education lessons with an increasing uptake in extra-curricular sport.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

Evidence from school records, supported by inspection findings, shows that the quality of teaching is improving with an increasing proportion of lessons that are outstanding. The school has acted decisively to improve teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and lesson observations confirm improvements in learning and progress as a result of staff changes and the support of senior staff and middle managers.

The key characteristics of the highly effective teaching observed in the majority of lessons included strong subject knowledge and planning to meet the needs of all learners, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, especially Black African and Bangladeshi students. Here, the most effective teachers made good use of targets, as well as of individual, paired and group work with opportunities for student leadership within the group. In a minority of lessons, however, the teacher sometimes talked too much; this resulted in students taking a passive role which often limited their progress.

Assessment is satisfactory and students have a good awareness of their target levels/grades as well as what they must do to meet them. However, across and within subjects, there are too many inconsistencies in the frequency and quality of marking. Assessment stickers provide feedback on the grades awarded and identify what students need to do next in some cases, but the use of these stickers is variable.

The curriculum is good and meets statutory requirements. It meets the needs of all learners with a balance of academic and vocational qualifications including an increasing range of BTEC qualifications. There are good opportunities to develop literacy skills but less evidence of numeracy being developed across other subjects. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, and participation rates are high. There are a number of weeks specifically devoted to enhancing the curriculum, focusing on enterprise, the environment and refugees as well as creativity supported by the school's specialist status. There is clear evidence that these are used effectively to engage students and increase motivation.

Care, guidance and support are good, and procedures to support all students are embedded and effective. Students express confidence in the advice and support offered to them. Transition arrangements are very well supported with strong links to partner primary schools and other post-16 providers. Vulnerable students are exceptionally well supported and the school has well-established links with a range of external agencies to offer personalised support for students and their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

The school has responded well to the issues raised at the last inspection and good progress has been made on all of these. The headteacher and senior staff are determined to raise the level of students' achievement further with a focus on improving teaching, learning and progress. Self-evaluation is accurate and there is a strong sense of purpose as well as a clear understanding of the school and its priorities.

As a result of the successful strategies to develop the role of middle leaders, they are now more actively involved in monitoring, evaluating and taking responsibility for the performance of the school. They share good practice and take the lead in initiatives to support ongoing improvement. Senior staff and middle leaders judge the quality of teaching accurately through regular lesson observations. The proportion of good or better teaching is improving.

The effective governing body is active in shaping the direction of the school. Minutes of meetings confirm involvement in all areas of the school, overseeing such matters as contracts, professional development, school uniforms and vertical tutoring. They make a very strong contribution to the work and direction of the school as the governing body enjoys wide representation from local business and the community. They are actively involved in the school's development plan with progress carefully monitored by the appropriate governors' committees.

The school enjoys strong relationships with parents and carers. Attendance rates at pastoral and subject meetings are always high. The headteacher's newsletter communicates school news and offers guidance on ways parents and carers can support their children's learning summarised in a number of languages. Specialist status has been used well to develop partnerships with parents and carers, and the community, including an active 'Parents and Friends' group which has organised an annual summer fair and a very successful international evening.

Leaders and managers have a sensitive awareness of students' diverse needs and a range of strategies to support parents and carers whose circumstances make it harder for them to engage with the school. The proactive work of the school to engage parents and carers who are less confident in speaking English confirms the school's commitment to promoting equal opportunities.

Safeguarding procedures are good and meet requirements with clear and well understood procedures and responsibilities. Risk assessment procedures are robust and effective, given the considerable rebuilding which is taking place on the school site. The school is safe and secure.

The promotion of community cohesion is good and the school knows its students very well, although there is no formal audit informing policy decisions. The school enjoys extensive links with the community including the British Library, Camden Art Centre and the Somers Town annual carnival. Extensive international links with schools in Zanzibar, Palestine and South Africa are recognised through the British Council's International Schools award. The breadth of experiences locally and internationally helps to ensure students' understanding of communities and raise their confidence and esteem.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Outcomes for students in the sixth form are satisfactory. Attainment is below national averages but improving. Attainment on entry is lower than in comparable sixth forms and data from the school confirms that progress is presently in line with expectations and rising. Students make a positive contribution to the school and the wider community including helping with lower-school classes, working with local primary schools and raising money for a local environmental charity. Most students follow academic courses but there are an increasing number of successful BTEC courses on offer which are having a positive impact on attainment and progress. Teaching in the sixth form is now good with increasing evidence of lessons which offer strong intellectual challenge, such as the A-level psychology lesson where students analysed data while the teacher challenged them to reflect on their learning and identify what they needed to do to improve. Relationships are very strong and teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Assessment practice is variable with some good practice evident in psychology and performing arts. For example, in a Year 12 performing arts lesson, students translated assessment criteria into student-friendly language and then engaged in self- and peer-assessment to complement the detailed assessment records already held by staff.

Curriculum programmes and opportunities for additional activities have improved and are now better matched to students' learning needs, including new courses introduced as a result of student demand, such as BTEC sport. Curriculum partnerships are underdeveloped but the school works with other local sixth-form providers to increase the subjects on offer. Care, guidance and support are good, with students benefiting considerably from the advice given regarding future choices. Transition procedures into and out of the sixth form are strong, with many students proceeding to higher education.

Leadership and management are good and school leaders have identified a number of key areas for further improvement with evident improvement in recruitment and retention as

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well as attainment in the BTEC courses. Systems are embedded sufficiently to enable further improvement but actions have not had time to have a full impact on attainment and progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The Ofsted questionnaire was returned by very few parents and carers. Of those that responded, the overwhelming majority felt that their children enjoyed school and the school kept them safe. They said that teaching was good and that the school was led and managed well. Parents and carers agreed that their children were making good progress and that they were told about this progress. They said that the school kept them informed and took account of their suggestions and concerns. A very small minority commented about unacceptable behaviour and a few felt that the school could do more to help them to support their children's learning. The questionnaires confirmed the findings of the school's own surveys and the majority views expressed are in agreement with the findings of the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Camden Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 832 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	43	12	57	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	9	43	12	57	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	9	43	12	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	33	14	67	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	29	15	71	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	29	15	71	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	24	15	71	1	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	7	33	12	57	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	29	14	67	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	52	9	43	1	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	14	14	67	2	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	38	13	62	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	43	11	52	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



23 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of South Camden Community School, London NW1 1RG

On behalf of the inspection team, I am writing to thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your school. I thought you might be interested in our findings and may even wish to read the full report.

We concluded that your school provides a satisfactory level of education. Examination results are improving quickly and we were pleased to see the progress that you are now making in your lessons. We were particularly impressed with the improvements in attendance and acknowledge the school's actions in ensuring that you attend school regularly.

The quality of teaching is good, although we have asked your teachers to be more consistent in their marking and feedback to you about how to improve and do even better. The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good overall. We were pleased to read your positive responses to the student questionnaire and to hear that you enjoy school, feel safe and value the opportunity to be involved in the school and community.

We have asked your teachers to continue to work on raising attainment, especially in science, and improve teaching. The school agrees that this can be done by making sure that lessons are adapted to meet the particular needs of individual students so that everyone is challenged appropriately. We have also asked that teachers provide you with frequent subject-specific guidance on how to improve.

All of you can help through regular attendance, good behaviour and working hard to meet your targets.

Once again, thank you for your contribution to the inspection and very best wishes for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Metcalf

Lead inspector

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