

Southfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110191
Local Authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	356697
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Marengo
Headteacher	Rose Mahony
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 16 lessons and the work of 16 teachers. Meetings were held with students, groups of staff, members of the governing body and a local authority representative. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's development plan, the latest report by the School Improvement Partner, governing body records, the most recent data on the students' attainment and progress, safeguarding policies, and records and assessment information. Inspectors also analysed the questionnaires which were returned by six parents and carers, 36 students and 28 school staff.

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

- The performance of students in the classroom and through the school's data, to check that all groups of students, including those with additional learning needs, are making the best progress that they can.
- The standards of assessment and planning, to see how effectively teachers adapt the curriculum to take account of the interests and abilities of each student.
- How well the school manages the students' behaviour and monitors the students' attendance to promote their progress.
- How effectively managers at all levels monitor, evaluate and improve on provision and the outcomes for students.

Information about the school

The school provides for students with a statement of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). A minority of students have additional learning difficulties. It is designated as co-educational but there are currently no girls on roll, a situation which has existed for some years. There are weekly boarding places (Monday to Friday) for 16 students and this provision was subject to a Social Care inspection in parallel with the present inspection. The students come from nine local authorities. Almost all of the students are from a White British background and the proportion known to be eligible for a free school meals is substantially above the national average. There is currently an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher who have been in post for two months.

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

3

Main findings

Southfield is a satisfactory school. There are strengths in the outstanding quality of care, support and guidance for students. Sensitive and vigilant pastoral care ensures that students are making good progress in their personal development. Safeguarding procedures are very secure and, as a result, students feel safe and happy. This is illustrated by their above average attendance. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Parents and carers strongly support the school's work and their relationships with school staff are excellent. The provision for boarders is outstanding and meets or exceeds the national minimum standards in all respects except for some aspects of record keeping.

The students' progress is satisfactory. On entry to the school, their attainment is slightly lower than average, due largely to their history of challenging behaviour and negative attitudes to learning while in their previous schools. The students make satisfactory progress through the school. By Year 11, although their attainment remains just below average, most students leave with a range of GCSE and Entry Level qualifications, although these are rarely at higher grades. The minority of students identified as having additional learning needs are taught effectively and achieve well.

There is, however, not enough good teaching to ensure the majority of students make better progress. In particular, assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that lesson activities challenge all the students to make the best progress that they can. Students do not always have clear enough individual short-term targets and they do not sometimes, therefore, know how to improve their work. Although lessons are on the whole orderly and well managed, work which the students perceive as too easy or too hard can sometimes result in frustration. Not all staff consistently follow the school's behaviour management procedures and, as a result, time is sometimes wasted in dealing with inappropriate conduct. Due, however, to the quality of the school's care and support, there are very few serious incidents. Considering the previous history of challenging behaviour of many students, adults are successful in helping students to learn to moderate and to control their own behaviour and show responsibility in responding to other students and to the expectations of staff.

The curriculum provides well-balanced opportunities for students to follow the same activities as mainstream schools. There is a suitable emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy, science and research skills in information and communication technology. There are well-developed creative and sporting opportunities, and timetabled sessions, to help the students develop their personal skills. The vocational curriculum is very good and plays a significant part in maintaining the motivation of older students. All vocational courses are suitably accredited. This enables students to gain a range of certificates and awards, many of which are a bridge to further education. For example, all the leavers last year successfully went on to further study or training.

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The acting headteacher, although only in post for a few weeks, has maintained firm leadership and management of the school, through her experience and expertise. An enthusiastic senior team has supported her. The governing body is aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and holds the school to account in tackling weaknesses. Senior leaders are making better use of the substantial data on the students' academic performance and their personal development and behaviour. Not all leaders, however, are sufficiently involved, as yet, in monitoring the quality of teaching and the students' progress. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate but currently planning lacks sharpness in establishing exactly what the school needs to do to ensure significant progress. However, essential systems are embedded sufficiently to enable the school to continue to improve. As a result, given the outcomes for students, there is a satisfactory capacity to improve further and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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 the attainment of all students by:
 - improving the use of assessment information to ensure that work is consistently well matched to students' individual needs
 - ensuring that students have clear short-term individual targets which they understand and which show them how to improve their work.
- Improve standards of the students' behaviour by ensuring the consistent application of behaviour management strategies.
- Improve the quality of teaching to raise standards further by ensuring that all leaders at the school are sufficiently involved in, and accountable for, the monitoring of lessons and the students' learning.
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for boarding, which have not been met.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students join the school with levels of knowledge, understanding and skills which are generally below those expected for their age. Subsequently, as confirmed by the school's data and work seen by inspectors in lessons, they make satisfactory progress. The quality of learning in lessons is at least satisfactory and, in a minority of the lessons seen, it was good, with occasionally outstanding outcomes. The students with additional learning needs, such as in communication, access well-targeted support from speech and language therapists. The well-planned literacy support enables students to increase their reading and spelling ages and so derive full benefit from their learning. The boarding provision makes a very positive contribution to the education of the young people in residence. For instance, the provision helps them develop positive attitudes to their health and fosters their emotional and social well-being. Students generally develop positive attitudes to their learning. This is a major step forward for some students compared to their careers in mainstream schools. When work is interesting and well matched to their abilities, the students enjoy their learning and make good progress. This was seen in a

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Year 10 English lesson where students were analysing the actions of characters in a play by Shakespeare. The work was challenging but the students were well prepared through the teacher's perceptive questions. The teacher and her assistant very effectively supported those students who found some difficulty. As a result, the students worked with concentration and the confidence that they could achieve success. They were pleased with their efforts and achieved well. In this lesson, their behaviour was good.

The majority of students have a good understanding of, and subscribe to, a healthy lifestyle. Most students, for instance, enjoy the breakfast club and take full advantage of the sporting opportunities they are given. The students, during discussions with inspectors and in their questionnaires, indicate that they know how to keep themselves safe. The students get on well, there is very little bullying and this is dealt with effectively and sympathetically by staff. This ability to work together, the extent to which they develop basic skills, and the excellent opportunities for work experience prepare them well for further education. The school council has influenced, for instance, the building of a shelter in the playground. There are good links with the local community through involvement in events such as the Wokingham winter carnival and in the variety of work experience and vocational placements. Local residents have praised the students' behaviour in these situations. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students demonstrate tolerance and empathy as they try to resolve disputes and they have a developing sense of what is acceptable conduct. They respond well to the many cultural opportunities such as visits to the Globe theatre and residential experiences. There are visits to school from musicians and arts groups of all cultures, and this gives the students a good understanding of cultural diversity.

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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	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
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

How effective is the provision?

Standards of teaching are satisfactory overall. Many teachers are subject specialists. Where teaching is good, it is characterised by the teacher's good knowledge of the subject and by well-paced and interesting lessons. In these lessons, teachers use effective techniques to check students' understanding, for example by using well-targeted questions. The students receive a very high degree of individual tuition from the teacher and well-informed support assistants. This promotes good relationships, gives the students confidence to learn from their mistakes and to maintain their motivation to remain on task and to behave well. However, in less successful lessons, assessment of the students' day-to-day progress is not sharp enough. This can lead to less-effective planning for individual learning needs and imprecise targets which do not help the students to improve their work. Support from adults is less well targeted for individuals and this can slow down the pace of learning.

The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and aspirations. There are clear and well-constructed schemes of work. The students follow a mainstream timetable and there is a suitable emphasis on the development of basic skills. Teachers make sure in most lessons that students have the opportunity to practise these skills in a variety of situations. Students with additional needs receive effective literacy and numeracy support and some of these students have personalised timetables. This is having a positive effect on their progress. There are well-integrated and effective programmes in personal development

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and emotional well-being, taught through personal, health and social education lessons and through creative lessons in art, music and drama. Older students have a wide choice in developing their vocational interests and experience. These courses, which are taught off site by a range of providers, contribute significantly to the students' enjoyment and motivation to go into further education, and effectively support their social skills and independence.

The school's strong emphasis on promoting the students' emotional well-being results in them feeling secure and well looked after. Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. There are very good partnerships with a range of outside health and social care professionals which support students effectively. Standards of care and support in the boarding provision are excellent. Students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and those who arrive later during the school year are very well supported. Attendance is closely monitored and the school is active in combating absence through very regular communication with parents and carers. There are very good transition arrangements when students are about to leave school. The school maintains good partnerships with local colleges and has an excellent record in ensuring leavers go on to further education or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has 'steadied the ship' through a period of change and has successfully maintained morale throughout the school. A committed leadership team supports her. The boarding provision is managed to a high standard. Some senior staff are not yet involved sufficiently in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and outcomes for students. This means planning is not as sharp as it should be and self-evaluation, while generally accurate, lacks some of the focus on the students' performance which would help raise standards further. The school's leaders are well aware of this and are starting to implement effective procedures to remedy these weaknesses. The governing body discharges its statutory duties appropriately. Governors monitor all aspects of the students' safety to a very high standard. A minority of very active governors hold the school to account in tackling areas for development, understand the challenges it faces and are directly involved in setting appropriate priorities for improvement.

Leaders make sure that all students have equal access to learning opportunities and they are making efforts to ensure there is no discrimination against any group. The school has a good record, for instance, in tackling the very occasional incidents of racist or homophobic behaviour. Relations with parents and carers are excellent. Parents and

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carers report that the school keeps them well informed of their children's progress and that they are confident to approach staff at any time. There are very effective partnerships with colleges and local vocational and work experience providers. These links provide added value and support to the students' learning and well-being. The school promotes the development of students' understanding of community cohesion in an effective way. Students engage positively with the local community and their knowledge of ethnic, religious and cultural traditions in the national and global community is developing well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The small number of parents and carers who completed questionnaires felt very positive about the school and were happy with all aspects of provision. They particularly felt that they were kept well informed about their child's well-being and had confidence that their children were making good progress. One parent commented, 'We could not wish for a better school for our son. The care is outstanding. Communication with parents is excellent.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfields 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 6 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	6	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	83	1	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	83	1	17	0	0	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)	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	50	3	50	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	66	2	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	83	1	17	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.



8 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Southfields School, Wokingham RG40 2HR

Not long ago, my colleague and I visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. Southfields is a satisfactory school with some very good features, although there are some things it can still do better. This is what we found.

- You are making satisfactory progress in your work.
- You have a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory. It could be improved, although it is clear that you are making progress in learning to control your conduct and to respect other people. A very large majority of you have above average attendance.
- You are safe and well looked after. All the adults take care to make sure you are secure and able to learn well.
- Your parents and carers are pleased with way the school is run and with the progress you are making.

To help you to make still better progress, I have asked the teachers to use the information about how you are getting on in lessons, to give you clearer learning targets. This will show you more easily how to make your work better and will help your teachers to give you work which is just right to help each of you to improve even faster.

I have asked the teachers and the support staff to make sure they are always consistent in the way they respond to you, so that you can be helped better to understand and control your behaviour.

I have also asked senior staff to monitor the way you are taught and your progress more carefully, to make sure you are all achieving as well as you can.

You can all help the school to get even better, of course, by always trying your best and behaving well.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector

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