

South Sefton Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135387
Local authority	Sefton
Inspection number	360721
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	16–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	547
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	547
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Wise
Principal	Laetitia Shemilt
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
School address	Sterrix Lane Litherland Merseyside L30 2BD
Telephone number	0151 2886300
Fax number	0151 2886301
Email address	admin@sssfc.ac.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 24 lessons taught by 24 teachers and eight sessions of extra-curricular enrichment. They held meetings with three groups of students, leaders, managers, staff and the governing body. Inspectors observed the college's work, and looked at records of students' attainment and progress, reports to governors, minutes of meetings, self-evaluation documents, the college improvement plan, attendance records and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors also evaluated questionnaire responses from 300 students, 36 staff and 105 parents and carers.

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

- The college's success in raising students' achievement since its establishment in 2009.
- The impact the management of teaching observations has on improving the overall quality of teaching.
- The robustness of planning and quality-assurance processes and its impact on students' learning.

Information about the school

South Sefton Sixth Form College was established in September 2009 as a result of a local review of sixth-form provision. It is housed in new purpose-built accommodation. The college works collaboratively with six partner 11 to 16 secondary schools in south Sefton and welcomes students from across the borough. It is one of very few centres in the country which are designated as schools but are exclusively for students aged 16 to 19.

The great majority of students is of White British heritage. Last year a high proportion of students was in receipt of the education maintenance allowance. About 15% of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities and a small number has a statement of special educational needs.

The principal is also headteacher of one of the partner schools. Day-to-day management of the college is the responsibility of the vice principal and the senior leadership team.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

South Sefton Sixth Form College has got off to a flying start by establishing itself as a good provider of education. It has several outstanding features. The college was set up to offer high-quality academic courses to young people from its community and to a very large extent it has succeeded in achieving this goal. It enables a high proportion of students to progress to university, many of whom are the first from their family to access higher education. Central to the college's success is the outstanding care it provides. Students feel extremely safe and get on very well with each other and their teachers. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and both staff and students are extremely committed to the college community. This is typified by the comments of students who told inspectors: 'They really treat you as adults and listen to what you think' and 'Everyone here wants this place to succeed and works very hard'. Excellent advice and guidance helps students take responsibility for their own learning and set and achieve ambitious targets.

The college fulfils its mission by providing a good curriculum based upon advanced academic courses. Last year the college extended its range of vocational programmes to meet students' differing needs and enable them to complete their studies successfully. All students participate in a broad range of enrichment activities which helps them to develop well both socially and culturally. They make a good contribution to the college and wider community through the work of the student council and by their charitable activities. Parents have great confidence in the college and are very happy with the standard of education it provides.

A combination of good teaching, study support and thorough tracking of each student's progress leads to good achievement. Nevertheless, the college recognises it needs to further develop the way in which teachers use assessment information, in particular, to ensure learning activities are tailor-made to meet all students' abilities. College managers observe lessons and accurately identify good teaching and learning. They provide effective support and development opportunities for individual teachers. However, the information derived from observations is not used effectively enough in the quality assurance and planning process. For example, it is unclear how the college intends to increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding.

Most students enter the college having gained five GCSE subjects at grade C or above. Very effective initial guidance ensures students join appropriate A-Level courses. Students make good progress and achieve well given their starting points in

most subjects. However, the proportion of students gaining high grades is slightly lower than average in most subjects.

The principal and senior leaders demonstrate a strong determination to ensure all students, whatever their backgrounds, reach their full potential. Their ambitious approach is summed up by the college's motto of 'Where aspiration meets opportunity'. Leaders know the college's strengths and areas for improvement and have taken robust action to ensure that the quality of provision is high. However, some elements of the planning process lack precision. Too little use is made of the partnerships that have been developed to challenge or validate judgements around the quality of provision. Governance is strong and tough decisions have been made to ensure the college provides good value for money. All of these factors combine to give a picture of a college going in the right direction with a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of planning by:
 - using lesson observations more systematically to inform self-evaluation and improve the quality of provision
 - identifying clear targets to help the college achieve its ambition to become outstanding
 - extend the use of partnership-working to help quality assure the work of the college.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Outstanding behaviour and mature attitudes contribute to students' good overall achievement. There are some minor fluctuations in levels of attainment across subjects but generally pass rates are high and in line with those found nationally. Examination results represent good and sometimes outstanding progress given students' starting points. This includes those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who make similarly good progress to that of their peers. The overall proportion of students gaining high grades across subjects is lower than the national average.

Students make a good contribution to the college's success. The students' council has good ideas about how it can improve. For example, they are in the process of developing more ways in which they can engage the wider community and develop charitable activities. A wide variety of information and guidance on health-related issues is provided, participation in physical activities is high and a healthy range of food is made available. However, students' questionnaires indicated that a significant proportion of students felt the college could do more to assist them to lead healthy lifestyles. Apart from this one issue, the views expressed by students were very positive and those who spoke to inspectors praised all aspects of the college community. Students' levels of attendance vary but are generally high when compared to most post-16 settings.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is good. There is a purposeful atmosphere in lessons and students' attitudes to learning make an excellent contribution to their progress. They develop a good range of skills, knowledge and understanding across many subjects. New technology is used effectively to add interest to presentations. Good independent study facilities are available and well-used. Teachers have expert knowledge of their subjects and track the progress of students meticulously. In the best lessons, they use their knowledge of students' prior skills and aptitudes to design learning activities carefully that ensure all students are challenged by their work. Where lessons are less successful, work is not matched closely enough to individual needs and teachers spend too long directing classes rather than allowing students to learn independently.

The college provides a broad range of advanced academic programmes. In addition, it has introduced a small number of vocational programmes to ensure the needs of all students are met. Students participate in a wide range of visits and work experience opportunities and benefit from many visiting speakers and experts. The college has grown substantially in its first two years and has almost reached full capacity, clearly demonstrating that it meets the needs of its community. Enrichment activities are very popular and used well to give students a broader outlook on life.

Outstanding advice and guidance are provided to students from the time they join the college until the time they leave. This enables them to set high aspirations and make well-informed choices about their future education and careers. The college works very successfully with partner agencies and specialists to provide excellent care for vulnerable groups and this enables them to complete courses successfully. Great effort has been made to emphasise to students the importance of attendance and punctuality. This has resulted in many students improving their levels of attendance in comparison to their previous schools.

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

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The college has achieved a great deal in two years. In the words of the vice principal it 'hit the ground running, and has results that some well-established colleges would envy'. The ambition to turn the college into an outstanding institution pervades everything it does. The morale of staff is high and they work very effectively as a team. The college makes a significant contribution to the cohesion of the local community by successfully fulfilling its niche within the educational pattern of provision. Equality of opportunity pervades all aspects of the college's work. Different groups of students perform equally well. Success has been achieved through good leadership and management at all levels with the support and challenge of a very knowledgeable group of governors. Tough decisions to ensure the financial future of the college have been made. Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough.

Senior leaders have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. However, sometimes they are not articulated clearly enough when evaluating the quality of the college's work. Reports do not always make sufficient links between outcomes for students and the quality of provision. The college improvement plan clearly identifies its ambition and priorities; however, milestone targets to measure progress are not sharp enough. Leaders have already begun to develop these areas for improvement. Its track record so far proves it has a good capacity to improve and achieve its ambition to become an outstanding institution.

These are the grades for the 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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents are extremely happy with the college. The vast majority of respondents agreed with all the statements on the questionnaire. However, some did not feel in a position to comment on all aspects of the work of the school because it was too early in the term.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at South Sefton Sixth Form College 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 106 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 547 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	58	44	42	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	58	39	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	40	38	45	42	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	42	44	42	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	44	47	44	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	37	35	43	41	5	5	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	26	53	50	11	10	2	2
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)	41	39	44	42	4	4	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	40	51	48	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	46	35	33	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	33	44	42	5	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	42	44	42	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	56	53	41	39	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



Friday 23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of South Sefton Sixth Form College, Merseyside, L21 0DB

Thank you for your warm welcome when we visited your college and for helping us with the inspection. We think your new college is an exciting and purposeful place where students with high aspirations are given every opportunity to succeed.

We found that it provides you with a good standard of education and has some outstanding features. Overall you make good progress on the courses you study. We were most impressed by your attitudes to learning and the industrious atmosphere in lessons. You told us that the staff really care about you and we agree. The advice and guidance you are given is excellent and ensure that you choose the right courses and are well-prepared for the next stage in your career. Good teaching contributes to your success and the range of courses you are offered matches well with your ambitions to progress to higher education.

When you consider the college is only two years old, some of this is quite remarkable. It has been brought about by good leadership and dedication of all the staff. Despite the success of the college so far, leaders agree that there is more work to do, and are very ambitious for the future. We have made the following suggestions to help them:

- Improve the quality of planning by:
 - using lesson observations more systematically to inform self-evaluation and improve the quality of provision
 - identifying clear targets to help the college achieve its ambition to become outstanding
 - extend the use of partnership-working to help quality assure the work of the college.

We are convinced that the college has a good capacity to improve and know that you will play your part by continuing to contribute well and work hard.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
Her Majesty's Inspector

