

# The Sydney Russell School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101246
<b>Local Authority</b>	Barking and Dagenham
<b>Inspection number</b>	276478
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2005
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ian Rowley Mr Roger Leighton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Parsloes Avenue Dagenham RM9 5QT
<b>Telephone number</b>	02082704333
<b>Fax number</b>	02082704377

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2005
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four contracted inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Sydney Russell School is larger than average and in recent years the number of students on roll has shown a steady increase. The sixth form is relatively small and is part of a consortium with two other schools. Almost all students come from the local neighbourhood, which has a high level of deprivation. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is more than twice the national average. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities is the same as that found in other schools. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is broadly similar to the national average. A significant number of students have a first language other than English. The school shares the facilities of a leisure centre with the local community and benefits from a recently opened suite for information and communication technology (IT) and a drama theatre. It is seeking specialist status as a Media Arts College. The school has had difficulties in recent years in recruiting and retaining staff in some subjects. There is now greater staff stability.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade:

### What the school should do to improve further

\* improve the results of lower attaining students in mathematics\* improve the examination results in under-performing subjects at Key Stage 4\* ensure the range of subjects offered at Key Stage 4 provides sufficient challenge for all students\* ensure all students who are learning English as an additional language receive appropriate support.

## Achievement and standards

Grade:

### Personal development and well-being

Grade:

### Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

Grade:

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory with some good features. In the sixth form it is good. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and has put in place plans for improvement. The judgements that senior managers make of the quality of individual lessons are accurate, which was demonstrated when they joined inspectors for the observation of lessons. Teachers generally have good relationships with students and students are willing to learn. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations. Lessons are well planned and systematically move students forward, especially in literacy classes. Information and communication technology is used well to stimulate students' interest. Where teaching is only satisfactory, explanations are too complex for less capable students and lessons rely too much on teacher direction. Questioning is not always used effectively to get students to think more deeply and develop their speaking skills. Shortages of staff, particularly in the mathematics department have meant that temporary teachers often cover classes. This has had an impact on the consistency of teaching and the progress made by some students. Target setting is used well in several subjects and has raised the aspirations of staff and students. However, the tracking of groups of students is not fully in place for all subjects. Marking is done regularly and teachers use an innovative rewards system to encourage students to do their best.

### Curriculum and other activities

Grade:

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets students' interests. The curriculum is well planned at Key Stage 3. Students are taught in ability bands and this has led to improved standards. At Key Stage 4, students study GCSE and general national vocational qualification courses and about a third of Year 11 students also follow vocational courses at the local college. This flexibility generally provides a creative response to meeting the needs of students with a wide range of capabilities and interests. However, some students on college courses in Year 11 do not receive sufficient opportunities for developing their numeracy and literacy skills. Also the curriculum lacks challenge since many students only study a maximum of seven GCSE subjects. Students in the sixth form choose from a wide variety of A level subjects and vocational courses

available through the new consortium arrangements. Students benefit greatly from an extensive and diverse range of extra curricular opportunities, particularly in the performing arts and in sport, which supports the school's aim to become a Performing Arts College. Students clearly enjoy these activities and as one commented, 'there are no boundaries here' to what you can do.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade:**

The school provides good care, support and guidance to students. Excellent links with external agencies enable the school to draw on a wide range of expertise to support students' emotional health and well-being. The child protection and risk assessment procedures are thorough. Vulnerable students are identified, their needs assessed and very good support given. Support for the significant number of students who speak English as an additional language is not provided consistently across the school which limits the progress of some. Excellent arrangements for supporting and managing students with behavioural problems have successfully raised the standards of previously disaffected learners. Transition arrangements from primary school are good, as is careers guidance for older students. Sixth form students greatly appreciate the high quality support which prepares them for future training, study or employment. Students find the target setting helpful and respond very positively to the school's extensive reward and merit systems.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade:**

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## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was inspected on 23 and 24 November 2005. I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. I thank those of you who helped the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life in the school. Some of your parents or carers came into school to talk with me and others returned a questionnaire. We also took their views and concerns into account when making judgements.

Here are the main points:

\* We believe The Sydney Russell School is an effective school. It has improved a lot in recent years and is on track to get even better\* the vast majority of you and your parents are happy with the school and know it is getting better \* the headteacher and those with responsibility run the school well to ensure that you are cared for well; they also work closely with people from outside the school to offer you help and support\* teachers and assistants have your best interests in mind and treat you with respect; you respond by behaving well\* targets and the merit system are used well to encourage good work and behaviour; most of you know what you need to do to improve your work and like the school merit system\* through the year and school councils you play an important part in improving the school and your ideas are acted upon\* if you experience difficulty with your reading, writing or behaviour the school supports you extremely well and helps you improve\* test and examination results are a lot better now than in the past. In some subjects they still need to be higher, for example in mathematics across the school and in some examination subjects at Key Stage 4. You can help your teachers improve results by aiming just a little higher than you do now and trying your best in all subjects\* some students who are learning English as an additional language need a bit more support.

Yours faithfully

Andrew Redpath, HMI (Lead Inspector)