



# Southgate School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 102047  
**LEA** Enfield LEA  
**Inspection number** 276643  
**Inspection dates** 23 March 2006 to 23 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Roy Blatchford

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Sussex Way
<b>School category</b>	Community		Cockfosters
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Barnet EN4 0BL
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	02084499583
<b>Number on roll</b>	1595	<b>Fax number</b>	02084416424
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Dr Russell Silk
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Anthony Wilde

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	23 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	276643

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The team met with students, staff and governors, and studied an extensive range of documentation, including data about the school's standards compared with those found nationally. About a third of the school's families returned questionnaires which assisted further in the writing of this report.

## Description of the school

Southgate School has 1553 students on roll, largely from the outer London boroughs of Enfield and Barnet. Students come from diverse backgrounds: about 10% of pupils are entitled to free school meals; there are 28 students who have a statement of special educational need; about 30 different languages are spoken among the students. The school has specialist science status and is extensively used by the wider community out of school hours.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Southgate School is providing a good education for its multi-talented and vibrant student body. Students' progress is good. The care, support and guidance given to students are outstanding, as are aspects of leadership and management.

The school is set amidst 1930s suburban housing, close to the northern end of the Piccadilly underground line. The extensive, well-kept campus and buildings of different architectural styles provide visitors with the impression that they are walking into a school with purpose, and one which takes pride in what its students achieve. These first impressions are not disappointed when watching students at work and play.

What are the notable features of this good school? With a well established reputation for providing a style of secondary education which local parents want for their children, and with GCSE examination results consistently above the national average, Southgate receives five applications for each place in Year 7. Thus, however far students travel to school each day, they arrive wanting to learn, strongly supported by their families. One Year 11 student reflected: 'We want to get here, we work, we appreciate what we have'. Students come from 50 different primary schools and Southgate has established a most effective academic and social transition programme. In the words of parents: 'Transition has had a very positive impact on my child's start at secondary school and through to Year 8'; 'we have been particularly impressed by the effort staff have put into the transition process and, consequently, how well our son and Year 7 have settled in'.

From day one in the school, students know that they are in the confident, professional hands of a large team of teaching and support staff which pays close attention to day-to-day routines. When aspects of organisation are not as effective as they might be, staff and students work together to resolve a problem, for example in creating staggered lunchtimes to ease overcrowding in the canteen. In the words of one Year 7 student: 'School really listens to the students'.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the school's provision is the outstanding care, support and guidance given to all students, whatever their age, background or interests. Students say, unprompted, 'the school is safe....discipline is what it needs to be'. They speak warmly of how 'this is a school for everybody - there is a chance for everyone, those who struggle get support'. In the thoughtful words of a Year 9 student: 'Everyone is so friendly, no-one comments on your background, culture or disability'. Sixth-form students talk about 'the accepting feel' of their common room, and those who have joined Year 12 from other schools (about 20% of the students) say they are made to feel 'they have always been here'.

The school approaches the reinforcement of basic rules and regulations with clarity of expectations, and, in the eyes of the students, with innovation and relevance. For example, younger students especially valued the equipment and punctuality weeks, with the opportunity to win prizes in a grand draw. Achievement days are viewed positively, 'the day we get a generic target and lots of subject targets'; and the Achievement postcard competition drew the whole school into a focus on the

importance of rewarding students for high quality work: 'when you've done something really well here, you get told'. Excellent systems for tracking students' progress and setting sharp targets contribute further to a picture of exemplary support and guidance. Previous concerns about the staff not meeting the needs of gifted and talented students have been roundly met; as a Year 7 student declared confidently, 'we don't do more, we do different, higher levels'.

All of this work by support staff, year tutors, form tutors and subject leaders, means that the students' personal development, and their awareness of social and cultural issues, develop well in their years at Southgate. However, while it is clear that the students are proud of their school they do not always take pride in how they wear their uniform and how they take care of their books. There are parts of the buildings and some classrooms which are drab and do not promote excitement in learning. In contrast, the art studio areas contain canvases to inspire.

What lies at the heart of any effective school is a well designed curriculum and programme of extracurricular activities, organised and taught well. Southgate's good curriculum is rightly undergoing review: the transition phase in Years 7 and 8 is now established, and the school is looking keenly at how best to make Years 9 to 11 equally challenging, with possible developments in vocational courses. The sixth form has a broad selection of academic and applied AS and A2 courses, and students speak highly of the guidance they receive about subject choices and preparation for higher education.

In the students' eyes, quite the best aspect of being at Southgate is their taking part in the tremendous range of clubs and visits on offer, from drama, sports and art to debating and Greek dancing. Senior students warmly commended the flexibility of their teachers who organise after-school examination revision classes to fit in with students' busy extracurricular commitments. Possibly the best way to illustrate the sheer range of activities open to Southgate students, opportunities which shape these confident young citizens, is to quote from a sixth-form student's community logbook: 'Cambridge lectures day - philosophy andamp; ethics; mock general election campaigning; made cakes to sell for Crisis at Christmas charity; London University seminar - death and decomposition; assisted at church bazaar'.

A high proportion of the lessons at Southgate are taught enthusiastically by teachers in command of their subject and with considerable classroom skills. The lessons are well planned and relationships with students are positive. Inspectors visited many lessons, including a Year 11 English class approaching poetry with real scholarship; A level art students intently focused on their habitation drawings; Year 8 having fun with mental starters in mathematics; a Year 7 science lesson where the fact that the teacher's demonstration was not going to plan only got students more involved; and sixth formers debating the influence of Greek myth on American drama. Students recognise the skills of their teachers, yet are equally perceptive in how lessons might sometimes be improved, for example in making starter activities less book-bound and more active.

Southgate is a self-critical school where the quality of leadership and management is high, with some exemplary aspects. The headteacher offers a confident, experienced

lead, together with a senior team which regularly has intelligent and wide-ranging debates about how to sustain success and build upon it. The new departmental cluster arrangements for holding middle managers to account and to share best practice are proving effective, while new and younger staff value the senior leadership team's effective communication skills, and willingness to listen to new ideas and back their introduction.

The extensive documentation describing how the school has reviewed all aspects of its work in recent years is a testament to effective leadership; so too are the actions taken to address identified issues, for example the changing intake in Year 7. Governors are equally involved in this process, and provide a level of challenge and quality of questioning to the headteacher which mean that proposed changes are thought through carefully before being introduced. Families too know their school, have confidence in what it does, but equally recognise where problems sometimes occur, for example in recruiting adequate supply teachers. One parent wrote perceptively: 'The leadership and management of the school are very good. The policies are set in place after consultation with those concerned and parents. Sometimes, on a practical level, they do not always achieve their goals'.

When asking senior students who know their school well how Southgate might be improved, they reply that they want current successes sustained. They are right. Equally, the headteacher and governors know that a number of areas of the school's practice could be improved. They share a well founded view that an eventual reduction in the current roll is desirable: some of the accommodation is not adequate for the number of students currently on site. They know that the science specialist status has not yet had the desired impact. They recognise that sharper expectations of the students by managers at all levels must be promoted. They are right to be confident that recent, necessary changes in the organisation of the sixth form should lead to improved results in public examinations. Currently, standards in sixth form examinations are satisfactory.

While the progress of most pupils across the 11 - 18 age range is good, there is a ready acknowledgement that the progress of some pupils in middle ability teaching sets could be accelerated. The school knows that students need to be encouraged to take greater responsibility for how they record homework in their planners and to be enabled to work, if not harder, at least smarter.

Southgate is a school in which the staff and governors have an unequivocal commitment to their students. They are dedicated professionals intent on sustaining the strong reputation of the school, share a unity of purpose, and are aware of what needs to be done over the coming years to move Southgate from being 'good' to 'outstanding'.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

This is good.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

This is good.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

This is good.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

This is good.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

This is good.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

This is outstanding.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

This is good.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

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

Students

My recent visit to Southgate School is written up in a report, available to families and published on the Ofsted website. I thought your Student Councils and School Forum might also like to have a summary of my findings, for discussion at your meetings. Much of my own teaching career has been spent in London schools and, walking into Southgate School, I at once felt at home in the vibrant and multi-cultural environment you have created. You are rightly proud of your good school, and the way you are cared for, supported and guided in your studies. As many of you said to me, your teachers and support staff will always find time for you, no matter what time of the day you ask them. Many of you also spoke enthusiastically about the exhaustive range of activities which the school provides and which you are always ready to respond to.

Those students I interviewed mentioned time and again, without my asking, that you feel safe at school, and that there exists a climate of tolerance and mutual respect between students and staff which you particularly value. My days in the school saw plenty of examples of that. I was especially struck by how you look after, for example, students in wheelchairs in parts of the building which become very crowded when you change lessons. I would also like to add that some of the folders and work, prepared by staff and students alike, set out in the conference room were outstanding - and I say that with the experience of visiting many secondary schools around the country. I also learned much from my visits to Year 8 and Year 9 common rooms! The headteacher, staff and governors have a clear view of the qualities of the school, how to sustain its success and how to look afresh at areas they have identified for development. In particular, they rightly see that there is a need to improve parts of the environment, and to expect you all to take a greater pride in, for example, how you look after your planners and books. My colleague inspector and I also think that some of you could achieve more in lessons, if more was expected of you. Recent changes to the running of the sixth form bode well for improved results at A level.

My personal thanks go to those of you who gave up time to meet us and share your work, views and interests. Both in the running and inspecting of schools, listening and responding to the students' voice is important and always enlightening. I wish you continued success at Southgate School and beyond into further and higher education.

Yours sincerely

Roy Blatchford

HMI