



Southend High School for Girls

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115344
Local Authority SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number 290213
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Southchurch Boulevard
School category	Maintained		Southend-on-sea
Age range of pupils	11–18		Essex SS2 4UZ
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01702 588852
Number on roll (school)	1016	Fax number	01702 587181
Number on roll (6th form)	254		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr Linda Barnard
		Headteacher	Mr David Mansfield
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Southend High School for Girls is an average sized selective grammar school with 1016 students. There are 254 students in the sixth form. Students are selected from within Southend-on-Sea and parts of neighbouring Essex under the areas' 11-plus entrance arrangements, consequently attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well above the national average. The majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The number of students eligible for a free school meal is well below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational need, is well below average. The school became a specialist language college in 2002. It is a popular school that is heavily over-subscribed.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a very successful specialist languages college that regularly achieves outstanding results. Students' attainment on entry is well above average. The school immediately begins to build on these firm foundations through good teaching, by providing care of the highest quality and by encouraging all students to participate in an excellent range of academic, sporting and cultural activities. Students thrive on this wealth of opportunity and thoroughly enjoy their time at school. Teachers give them the confidence to articulate their views, contribute to school life and help others in the local community. Parents greatly appreciate the richness of opportunity and care provided for their children and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. One parent commented that, 'my daughter is always eager to get to school each morning. She is always enthusiastic and enjoys all subjects. As a parent this is wonderful to see.'

Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are outstanding and have been for the past five years. For example, in 2006, every student achieved Level 6 in English and mathematics, and almost three quarters of them achieved Level 7. In Key Stage 4, GCSE results are outstanding. Last year every student achieved a minimum of at least five A* to C grades including English and mathematics and over two thirds of them gained five or more A* or A grades. The school has set itself challenging targets for 2007 and is on track to meet them. For example, almost all of the 74 students entered early for this year's GCSE English examination achieved A* or A grades.

Good teaching and learning ensures that all achieve well and attain very high standards. Lessons are characterised by good relationships reflecting teachers' friendly and professional manner and the very good attitudes and behaviour of students. On the few occasions when teaching fails to inspire or stimulate all learners, most continue to work hard and make good progress because they are well motivated, they respect their teachers and each other and behave accordingly. Outstanding care, guidance and support strengthens students' propensity to learn and provides an environment in which the vast majority excel in their studies and flourish as enthusiastic young people fully equipped to progress into further education or enter the world of work. Students report that they value highly the guidance they receive on future careers and entrance to university.

Students' personal development and well being are outstanding. They show real enthusiasm for learning, behave impeccably in lessons and around the school. They understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle through sensible eating at lunchtimes, regular participation in high quality physical education lessons and in extra-curricular sport. Several students compete nationally against other schools in a range of different sports. Students report that the school is a safe and friendly place to be and are willing to contribute their ideas to improve school life through the school council because they know that their views are listened to and acted upon. The schools' international links with schools in other countries through its specialist language status, charitable work in African schools and annual visits abroad are an outstanding feature of the school and this makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

An outstanding curriculum is well matched to learners' aspirations and provides all students with clear pathways to a wide range of GCSE and Advanced level qualifications. The time allocated to developing students' understanding of citizenship in Key Stage 4 is minimal. Students acquire a wide range of academic and social skills necessary to secure their economic well being and are given good opportunities to hone these skills through valuable work experience. An outstanding range of high quality enrichment activities is testimony to the commitment and dedication over many years of those teachers who see this as an integral feature of a young persons' development.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school is very well led by an informed headteacher who has the full support of his governors. He has distributed greater responsibility to senior managers to ensure that all staff are fully accountable for the standards achieved and are much more focused on improvement. Senior managers say they feel empowered to take the initiative and lead by example. Focusing on 'names not numbers' allows them to identify at a much earlier stage individual students who are not making sufficient progress and provide additional support for them to succeed. Self evaluation is accurate, honest and demonstrates a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school has made good progress since the last inspection.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The school has an outstanding sixth form. Standards are exceptionally high and have been so for a number of years, consequently the sixth form continues to grow and attract more students. Over one hundred students elect to stay-on into the sixth form and the retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13 is excellent. The majority of students achieve 3 Advanced Level qualifications and in last year's examinations more than half of all year 12 students and over two thirds of Year 13 students achieved higher A and B grades. Virtually all students move on to higher education when they leave the school. A combination of teachers' outstanding subject knowledge and use of resources, smaller teaching groups and high quality pastoral care contributes directly to the high standards achieved. Students' personal development and well being is outstanding. Students access an exceptional range of enrichment activities in school and benefit greatly from different educational and overseas visits. Most students partake in sport or recreation each week. They appreciate the support and guidance given by the careers officer when preparing applications to universities. Sixth formers play a significant role within the school and in the local community and most adopt leadership responsibilities, help younger students in their studies or volunteer to work with a range of community groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the exceptionally good practice seen in some lessons to increase the amount of outstanding teaching in all subjects.
- Increase the amount of curriculum time allocated for personal, social and health education including citizenship, in Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enter the school with attainment levels that are well above the national average and make good progress throughout Key Stage 3. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are outstanding, but fewer students achieve higher levels in science compared with English and mathematics. Students continue to make good progress throughout Key Stage 4 and standards achieved in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are outstanding in all subjects. GCSE results in 2005 were well above those achieved nationally but showed that a small minority of students had not achieved what they were capable of. The school refined its monitoring of individual students' progress which led to every student achieving at least 5 A* to C grades, including English and mathematics in GCSE examinations in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enjoy school, attend well and behave impeccably in lessons and around the school. Poor behaviour or racist incidents are very rare and the number of students excluded from lessons is very low. Students show respect for staff, each other and are keen to develop good habits and lead active, healthy lifestyles. Opportunities to take responsibility as members of the school council or as librarians are accepted eagerly and carried out with pride and dignity. Excellent social and moral values are deeply rooted in the school and students are able to take clear and well grounded viewpoints on a range of subjects within their lessons. Student's dedication to their academic work and the development of personal skills to work in the community provide them with a solid foundation for future economic independence.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The majority of teaching is good with well planned lessons, effective organisation and exceptionally strong relationships that foster mutual respect. Advanced skills teachers and lead practitioners are improving the quality of lessons and some teaching is quite outstanding. For example, drama lessons are exceptional because the teacher is able to enthuse and inspire students, challenge them to work hard, use their creativity and think for themselves. This exceptional practice is not shared across all subjects and at times, there is too much teacher talk and insufficient varied tasks to engage and stimulate all learners, particularly those students in mixed ability classes. An increasing

number of teachers use assessment very well to show students how they can improve their work but this is not widespread across all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

All students follow a broad curriculum that includes at least two languages until Year 9, an increasing number of students continue with both languages at GCSE level and many choose to study languages in the sixth form. This and an exceptional enrichment programme that includes visits abroad and links with other countries enhance students' learning and gives the school an excellent international dimension. Vocational courses in business and information and communication technology (ICT) compliment an excellent range of GCSE courses. Personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers education are appropriately taught by tutors and specialist staff in Key Stage 3 but insufficient time is allocated to it in Key Stage 4. This year, the teaching of English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3 has been condensed into Years 7 and 8 only, but it is too early to assess the full impact of this.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers know all students very well; their welfare and safety are given a very high priority. Parents are very appreciative of the level of care and guidance provided and the affection their daughters have for their school. Child protection arrangements are excellent with all staff receiving recent training. The school is inclusive of the needs of all students and the small proportion of those with special education needs achieve well. Support for pupils on entry in Year 7 and guidance when selecting GCSE options is very good and careers guidance is outstanding. Subject teachers and pastoral managers monitor the progress of individual students very well and direct additional support for those who may not be achieving as well as they should.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has turned adversity caused by a fire into a positive opportunity to provide new buildings and to improve the learning environment for students. He and his senior leadership team ensure that the performance of students, teachers and faculties are closely monitored and evaluated so challenging targets for raising achievement are met. Senior leaders are highly effective and clearly demonstrate that there is good capacity to make further improvements. Finances are well managed and resources are used efficiently and

effectively to secure excellent value for money. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well and fully supports the headteacher in his efforts to forge better links with other schools and the local community. The school has developed a key role in enhancing modern languages teaching in all local primary schools.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
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

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 February 2007

Dear Students

Southend High School, Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4UZ

Recently I visited Southend High School for Girls and found it to be an outstanding school. Your input was vital in helping me make this judgement so thank you for allowing me to join you in lessons and talk with some of you. I also spent time with some of your teachers, met with the chair of governors and read many letters from parents.

It was very pleasing to see how well teachers and support staff provide you with high quality care and advice to help you achieve very high standards. I was also very impressed with the way you show respect and care for each other and that many of you volunteer your time to help others through charitable and community work and adopting leadership responsibilities in the school. Teachers provide you with a wealth of enrichment opportunities and it is very pleasing to see so many of you involved in lots of different academic, sporting and cultural activities at lunchtimes and after school.

Language college status has extended the range of languages available to you and has helped you to forge excellent links with other schools and countries. Your school has many strengths and very few weaknesses, however I have asked your senior teachers to make a couple of improvements:

- Share the exceptionally good practice seen in some lessons to increase the amount of outstanding teaching in all subjects.
- Increase the amount of curriculum time allocated for personal, social and health education including citizenship, in Key Stage 4.

You can continue to play your part in making Southend High School for Girls even better than it is by asking your very good school council to share your views with the headteacher on how to make further improvements to the school. Once again, thanks for your help and I wish you all well.

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector