

# The Sutherland School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123585
<b>Local Authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	292722
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ted Wheatley

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>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	595
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	K Austin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Stephen Wall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 May 2001
<b>School address</b>	Gibbons Road Trench Telford TF2 7JR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 387800
<b>Fax number</b>	01952 387808

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 May 2007
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is smaller than average. It takes its pupils from a wide range of social backgrounds and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of pupils who do not have English as their main language is very low and very few are in the early stages of learning English. Attainment on entry to the school is below average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is above the national average.

The headteacher commenced work in February 2006 and the deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers are more recent appointments.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. Standards are below average but rising, and pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. The key factor is the continual drive from the headteacher and senior staff to improve the quality of teaching and the curriculum in order to push up standards and accelerate pupils' progress. Whilst at an early stage, the impact of measures taken are evident throughout the school. In particular, teaching is satisfactory and improving after a period of substantial staff changes. There is determination to eliminate weak teaching and to provide professional development for all staff. There are still some weaknesses, especially in managing the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils, ensuring pupils become actively involved in their learning and in making sure marking consistently tells pupils how they can improve their work. The curriculum is satisfactory, with improvements in the range of work-related and vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11.

The school has satisfactory and improving leadership and management. While they are good at the senior level, elsewhere they are satisfactory, though this can also be variable. Heads of departments are rapidly acquiring the leadership and management skills to help them drive up standards in their own subjects. Governors are increasingly involved with the school's work and play an active part in the school's planning for improvement. The school has made satisfactory, though recent, improvement since it was last inspected and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

There are still some areas of underachievement. Learning suffers where pupils do not behave well and they disrupt their own and others' progress. Some pupils do not become involved enough in what goes on in lessons so their learning is slow. However, pupils with learning difficulties make sound progress overall, due to the increasing effectiveness of the personal support they receive. The small proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school and are pleased with the recent improvements they see. They have a sound grasp of the importance of healthy lifestyles. A large proportion of pupils take part in the wide range of physical activities on offer, and are slowly adopting healthy eating habits. Most pupils attend regularly, but some do not and, despite the school's efforts, their attendance is improving only slowly. A small minority of pupils are late for school. Care, support and guidance are satisfactory and the procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are good. The school has effective procedures to deal with bullying and racism, and while pupils accept that there are occasional incidents, they think the school deals with these well. Regular assessment means that pupils know how well they perform, and this contributes to growing self-confidence. However, the quality of academic guidance is inconsistent and a small minority of pupils do not know what they need to do to reach higher standards or to improve their work.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace of progress by ensuring pupils are actively involved in their learning and by dealing more effectively with the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils.
- Help pupils understand how they can reach higher standards by ensuring marking and academic guidance give clear indications of what pupils need to do to improve their achievement.

- Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards are below average but with some exceptions pupils' achievement is satisfactory and improving. In particular, achievement is improving in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

After several years of end of Key Stage 3 national test results being well below average, standards are starting to rise. They are still below average, but the improvements made in checking on pupils' progress, setting targets and matching teaching to pupils' learning needs are starting to have a positive effect. Pupils' progress is improving and they are becoming confident in how well they can do. At GCSE, results have also been well below average, but mock examination results and the school's own assessment records show that standards are rising and that achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good. Inspectors agree with this picture of rising standards and improving achievement.

There is still some underachievement and there are two main reasons for this. The first is because a small minority of pupils disrupt learning and their behaviour is not well managed by teachers. The second is that in some lessons a small minority of pupils do not take an active enough part in their learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties have made sound and improving progress recently, due to good support from teachers and learning mentors. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory and sometimes good progress.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory and has improved despite the small minority of pupils who distract others and disrupt learning and this is most evident in Year 10. The majority of pupils enjoy school and value it as a safe and supportive environment. They are ready to acknowledge the recent improvements, particularly the improving curriculum and efforts to help them do better in their school work.

Attendance was unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection. It is still unsatisfactory and improving only slowly, despite a wide range of strategies the school has introduced. In addition, a small minority of pupils are late for school.

Pupils behave safely around school and have a sound grasp of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise, although they are slow to adopt healthy eating habits. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities offered by the school, such as sports, Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the school production. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural well-being is satisfactory, though there are limited opportunities for spiritual development.

Contributions by pupils to the community are good. Pupils are involved in initiatives to raise funds for charity and become involved with the widening work-related curriculum. Their preparation for future life is satisfactory overall and improving as their basic academic skills improve.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Satisfactory teaching contributes to the sound progress pupils make. The quality of teaching is improving as a result of stable staffing and well planned staff development. However, it remains too varied across the school. Key factors which are helping to raise standards in most lessons are generally good planning, with clear learning objectives, which provide an appropriate level of challenge for most pupils. Relationships are usually good, and teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use to motivate pupils to learn. However, in a significant minority of lessons where pupils' behaviour is not managed effectively, low level disruption slows the pace of learning. Occasionally, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to answer questions or to take a sufficiently active part in the lesson. Feedback to pupils on how to improve the quality of their work in lessons and through marking is satisfactory and improving, but it is inconsistent. In one Year 7 English lesson, for example, pupils evaluated the work of their peers with insight, justifying their views. Too often, however, the steps to be taken to raise standards further are not made clear to pupils.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum provides most pupils with an appropriate level of challenge. The school has made effective use of partnership arrangements with local colleges and other training organisations to provide a satisfactory and increasingly broad range of vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. This allows the school to meet the needs and aspirations of most pupils, especially those of lower ability, more effectively. Plans are in place to broaden provision further for pupils of all abilities in the next academic year, by offering, for example, an engineering course. Changes to the curriculum for ICT have contributed to higher standards and much better achievement in Years 10 and 11. Arrangements for the promotion of personal, health, and social education are satisfactory and make a sound contribution to the development of pupils' confidence and self-esteem. A large number of pupils profit from the opportunity to gain a GCSE qualification in citizenship. There is sound and improving provision for careers education and guidance and the school held its first highly valued careers festival during this academic year. Pupils gain valuable insights into the world of work through work experience placements in Year 10. The curriculum is enhanced by a large number of extra-curricular activities, especially in performing arts and sports, which the pupils enjoy.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The school's procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are thorough and robust. New procedures to support pupils, whilst not yet fully embedded, ensure that pupils feel safe and are listened to and cared for. In particular, pupils value the support and advice provided by the school nurse. Guidance for subject and career choices is satisfactory and improving.

Support for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory and benefiting from the effective deployment of support staff to help pupils. Individual learning plans for pupils with learning difficulties are not always detailed enough, but they are improving. Procedures to deal with

bullying and racism are secure and pupils are confident that incidents are dealt with well by the school. The approach to managing unacceptable behaviour through 'internal exclusion' is leading to improved behaviour and a fall in exclusions from school, although there is still evidence of low level disruption in some lessons.

Regular checks on pupils' progress and the process of setting targets are satisfactory. When this information is used to give pupils academic advice and guidance, their achievement improves. However, the process is not fully in place and varies between subjects, with the consequence that pupils do not always know how to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. At a senior level, the headteacher and senior staff give clear direction for how the school should improve, based on accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school is determined to raise standards and has worked with considerable energy to improve teaching. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are rigorous and leadership and management have been correct in seeing that as a major factor in helping to raise standards. Inadequate teaching is dealt with effectively through well planned support and training. The full impact of improvements has yet to be seen in all areas of teaching, and the school is aware of that, though there is already evidence of rising standards and improving achievement. There are still some weaknesses leading to pockets of underachievement, but they are being dealt with and the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory. The school is now more confident that ambitious targets for test and examination results will be realised.

At other levels, leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but this does vary. The school is working hard to ensure heads of departments acquire the skills they need to raise standards and improve achievement in their subjects. Their confidence and competence are improving.

Governors meet their statutory requirements. They are increasingly well informed about the school so that they can take an active role in supporting, guiding and challenging the headteacher in his efforts to raise standards.

The school has sound procedures to take the opinions of pupils and parents into account when planning improvements. However, it does not consistently keep parents fully informed of how it deals with issues. The school has good links with social services, support agencies, other schools and colleges that contribute effectively to the school's improvement.

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## Annex A

## 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>
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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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Sutherland School, Trench, Telford, Shropshire, TF2 7JR

We enjoyed the time we spent in your school and many of you were friendly and helpful to us. We spoke to several of you in meetings, lessons and around the school and what you told us has helped to build a clear picture of your school.

These are the main things we found out about your school:

- Your school gives you a satisfactory and improving education. Many of you recognise and like the improvements in the school.
- Your progress is satisfactory and the standards of your work are improving.
- Teaching and the range of subjects you study are satisfactory and becoming better, which is preparing you for life when you leave the school.
- Most of you behave quite well and come to school regularly, but some of you do not behave as well as you should, or do not attend often enough or are late for school, and this affects how well you learn.
- The school is a safe place. You learn about healthy lifestyles, but some of you are slow to change to eating healthy food.
- You enjoy all the out of school activities.
- You are involved with many activities in the local community and raise money for those less fortunate than yourselves.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- Make sure that you do even better at school by making activities in lessons interesting so that you take a more active part in them and to help teachers deal with those of you who do not behave properly.
- Make sure that you all know what you need to do to make better progress and reach higher standards in your work.
- Improve attendance and punctuality.

You can help, too. Those of you who do not attend regularly should try to do so, and those of you who are often late should try to be on time for school. If you are part of the small number of pupils who do not behave properly, you should try to behave better.

With best wishes

T Wheatley Lead Inspector