



Sexey's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123902
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292832
Inspection date 10 January 2007
Reporting inspector Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Cole Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Bruton
Age range of pupils	11–19		BA10 0DF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01749 813393
Number on roll (school)	512	Fax number	01749 812870
Number on roll (6th form)	159		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	MD Oliver
		Headteacher	S Burgoyne
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–19	10 January 2007	292832

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Sexey's School is a small, popular boarding school. About two thirds of the students board at the school. The admission of day students into Year 7 each year since September 2003 has caused the school to increase in size since the last inspection. The number of students in the sixth form is similar to most schools as additional students are admitted into Year 12 from other local schools. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is smaller than that found in most schools. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is also below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sexey's School provides students with a good education with many outstanding features. The very effective leadership of the headteacher ensures that the school is fully focused on raising achievement and promoting the excellent personal development of students. He is well supported by the senior leadership team.

The school's key strength is students' excellent personal development that enables them to work in a safe and harmonious community. Students are articulate and enthusiastic learners who are keen to engage in all aspects of lessons. Students enjoy their work and attendance is well above the national average. Relationships between students and between students and staff are excellent. The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. As one parent said, "Every child certainly does appear to matter at Sexey's." Students feel safe and this is contributing to their desire to do well. The excellent boarding provision of the school also makes a significant contribution to the personal development of students.

Teaching is good overall, with some outstanding practice within the school. The quality of teaching is monitored by the school leadership team and middle leaders. However, this monitoring lacks sufficient rigour to ensure consistency of good and better practice across the school. The good teaching ensures that all students make good progress in their learning. Standards achieved by students at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are extremely high.

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets the needs and interests of students very well. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and foreign exchanges that all enrich the learning experience for students.

The school has effectively addressed the issues raised at the last inspection and maintained very high standards of attainment. The senior leadership team know the strengths of the school well and have identified an appropriate agenda for future development. The school has good capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Standards in the sixth form are rising and students make good progress in their learning. Overall the quality of teaching is good. Students are well supported by their tutors, and personal development is outstanding. The school makes excellent provision for the students' care and guidance. There is a well-structured tutorial programme which has an appropriate emphasis on careers guidance and personal development themes. Many students progress to higher education at a wide range of universities.

The curriculum is good. Although it is essentially academic and mostly linked to Advanced Subsidiary and Advanced level, there is a broad range of courses on offer. While there is a small amount of vocational provision, the school recognises the need

to extend the range of vocational options. The school has plans to address this issue through its involvement in a 14–19 development strategy for 2008 along with other local providers. Students benefit from a wide range of sporting and other activities, which they regard as a strength of the school.

The sixth form centre, which has been opened since the last inspection, provides an excellent base for students and the staff most closely associated with their welfare and progress.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of the boarding provision is excellent. The school has effectively addressed the issues from the last inspection. Students report that they feel secure and have adequate access to their families. Relationships between students and staff are excellent. The outstanding care, guidance and support students receive contribute significantly to the high standards they achieve in external examinations.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour with which teaching and learning are monitored to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.
- Develop the vocational curriculum within the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards in the main school are extremely high and achievement is good. Students' attainment on entry to the school is above the national average. As a result of good teaching, all groups of students make good progress during their first three years at the school. They achieve very high standards by the end of Year 9. They make particularly good progress in mathematics, and standards in this subject are above those seen in English and science. The percentage of students achieving the higher levels in English in 2006 was below that seen in mathematics and science.

Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Although the percentage of students achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades fell slightly in 2006, it remained very high. Students make very good progress in most but not all subjects. For example, the progress made by students in modern foreign languages is less than expected. The school is aware of this issue and is taking effective steps to raise standards in this subject. The inclusive nature of the school is demonstrated by the fact that in 2006 all students achieved at least five or more GCSE passes. The progress of all groups of students is similar throughout the school.

The standards obtained by Year 13 students in Advanced level examinations in 2006 were in line with the national average. However, post-16 standards are rising in the sixth form with improved teaching. The standards achieved by Year 12 students in the 2006 Advanced Subsidiary level examinations were above the national average. Students are now making good progress during their time in the sixth form. The standards achieved in the vocational course offered by the school are above those of the academic courses. The progress made by boys and girls is similar.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding in both the main school and the sixth form. Attendance is excellent. Parents are very positive about the school. They see their children as happy, enjoying school and making good progress. Students say that the school is a safe environment, bullying is uncommon and staff deal quickly and effectively with any reported instances. Behaviour of students, both in lessons and around the site, is excellent. Relationships between students are excellent and there is an obvious respect and support for each other.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In particular, the school's strong Christian ethos is evident in its close links with the Diocese. Cultural diversity within the school is enriched by overseas boarding students. Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and most appreciate the commitment of the school in offering healthy food choices. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by students. The development of workplace skills is outstanding, as is the provision to ensure that all students are well prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and some is outstanding. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to ensure that their lessons are engaging and interesting. As a consequence, students work with enthusiasm and sustained concentration in almost all lessons.

Most teachers use lively starters to lessons to ensure that everyone is engaged in the learning process from the outset, setting a really good tone. This good practice ensures that all students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress because of the close match between the teaching and the needs of the learners. Teachers and students have excellent relationships, which makes for a good working environment in the classroom, with students enjoying their learning. However, there are

inconsistencies in teaching and in some lessons there is a lack of pace and an over-reliance on worksheets. On some occasions teachers do not make effective use of plenaries at the end of lessons to summarise and consolidate learning.

Assessment of learning takes place in all subjects through regular testing, helping teachers track the progress of their students. Many teachers engage students in peer and self assessment, highlighting the steps they need to take to improve further. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all departments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum for 11 to 16-year-olds is outstanding. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 builds well on what students have learnt before. It meets students' needs well, enabling them to make good progress and achieve high standards. In Years 10 and 11 the wide range of optional subjects available to all students caters well for their individual needs and interests. The range of optional subjects has recently been enhanced by the introduction of further vocational courses.

Boarding and day students benefit from the "After School Learning" programme, which is helping to develop independent learning skills. The very broad range of extra-curricular activities, trips and foreign exchanges available to students also makes a significant contribution to their excellent personal development.

Sixth form students can choose from a broad range of academic Advanced and Advanced Subsidiary examination courses. However, the range of vocational subjects open to students is limited. The school recognises the need to develop this aspect of its curriculum further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The level of care, guidance and support students receive is outstanding. As one parent said, "The staff go to great lengths to ensure that the children are happy, focused and supported." Students say that they feel safe and valued. Secure child protection and health and safety arrangements are widely understood and regularly reviewed. Students talk positively about how well they are settled into school on arrival and say they know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported. The links with external agencies such as integrated services and multi-agency support are strong and support particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk.

Assessment systems to track students' progress are in place. Early intervention programmes in Year 7 support the development of students' literacy skills. Students say that they know what their individual target grades are and most are clear about what they need to do to improve their work further. Some marking is of a high quality,

showing students how to improve their work. However, this is not consistently the case in all subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher leads the school very well and he is provided with very good support from his senior leadership team. Together they ensure that the school is clearly focused on achieving high standards and promoting the excellent personal development of students. Structures are in place for effective day-to-day management and this ensures that the school operates calmly and efficiently.

The headteacher is clearly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has good plans in place to address identified areas of weakness. Teaching and learning are monitored through lesson observation undertaken by members of the senior leadership team and heads of department. However, this process of monitoring is not yet sufficiently systematic or rigorous to ensure there is consistently good and better teaching across the school. The school has good central systems for storing assessment information. This data is used effectively to set students suitably challenging targets. The progress of students towards these targets is monitored well and effective steps are taken to tackle underachievement.

Governors know the school well and provide effective support and challenge to the headteacher and his senior team.

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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
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	1	
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	2	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
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?	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	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school recently. We met and talked with many of you, sat in some of your lessons and looked at work that you had done. Now that we have finished the inspection we wanted to let you know our findings.

We judged that your school is good, with many outstanding features. This is also what many of you and your parents told us. Your headteacher and senior staff lead the school very well. Throughout our time at the school you were very helpful, polite and courteous and we were very impressed with your outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Your relationships with each other and with teachers are excellent. You told us that you enjoyed school and this was also evident in your excellent attendance. Your teachers and support staff look after you extremely well and you told us you feel safe in school. You are taught well and some of the teaching we saw was excellent. All these factors ensure that you make good progress and do very well in external examinations. The school offers you a broad range of courses to follow in Year 10 and 11, including both academic and vocational choices. It was also good to hear that many of you are involved in the wide range of after-school activities, trips and exchanges provided by the school.

Although your school is very good, there are some things that could make it even better. We have asked the school to ensure that those features that make your best lessons successful are found in all your lessons. We have also asked the school to provide you with access to a broader range of vocational courses in the sixth form.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.