



The Sweyne Park School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131110
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 293707
Inspection date 5 October 2006
Reporting inspector Stephen Abbott HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Sir Walter Raleigh Drive
School category	Community		Rayleigh
Age range of pupils	11–16		Essex SS6 9BZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268784721
Number on roll (school)	1303	Fax number	01268780293
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Derek Few
		Headteacher	Mr Andy Hodgkinson
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	5 October 2006	293707

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Sweyne Park School is an above average sized secondary school, serving the town of Rayleigh and the surrounding area. It is a specialist science school and a training school. The school includes a 24 place Resource Base for Hearing Impaired Pupils (RBHIP). The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. Nearly all pupils are of White British ethnicity. Fewer than 3% of students are from minority ethnic groups and fewer than 2% have a first language that is not English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is close to the national average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs. The school has slightly more girls than boys, but there are variations in the gender balance from year to year. The older year groups contain relatively few pupils who had high attainment at age 11, but there has been change in recent years. The school now attracts its fair share of high attaining pupils at age 11, so although attainment on entry overall is below average, it is improving. This inspection was conducted just a few months after the school's highly respected headteacher died after a long illness.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Sweyne Park School is a very good school with outstanding features. Its greatest strengths are the very positive ethos that has been established, the exceptional quality of care and support and the outstanding leadership and management. The acting headteacher has an exceptional grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and its future direction. Pupils' personal development and well-being is excellent. In the well ordered environment that ensues, teachers feel empowered to try new ideas and pupils feel confident to express their views and ideas. This powerful combination of factors leads to very good progress by pupils. The relentless drive to improve is based on rigorous self-evaluation, which permeates the school. The views of pupils and parents are regularly sought and taken into account. Every department conducts its own self-evaluation and this process has developed the leadership skills of senior and middle managers, which are often excellent. By paying attention to details, the school has ensured that the changes it makes are well planned and executed. A growing proportion of the teaching is outstanding and the overall quality of teaching and learning is good. A well designed improvement programme has resulted in most teachers making good use of assessment to ensure that pupils are taught according to their needs. Pupils' achievement is very good because the outstanding care and support and the very good use of assessment creates the conditions for teaching and learning to be effective. Since its last inspection, the school has improved its curriculum. Citizenship and personal social and religious education are now well established. The three different Key Stage 4 pathways cater well for the range of needs of older pupils. However, the extent of partnership working in this area remains relatively small and certain working protocols with other institutions have still to be developed. The excellent care and guidance provided by the school has its foundation in the very good relationships between staff and pupils. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Effective training ensures that staff look out for the pastoral needs of all pupils and especially for those who are potentially vulnerable. The high quality of care is matched by very detailed monitoring of pupils' academic progress. This allows early identification of pupils who are falling behind, so support can be provided. Class tutors and year achievement leaders ensure that pupils are recognised as individuals and their guidance and support promotes good achievement and personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve the curriculum by strengthening partnerships with other institutions to meet the needs of pupils who would benefit from a more extensive vocational programme.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is particularly good. Starting from below average standards at age 11, they progress well to catch up with national expectations by age 14 and make

further very good progress to attain above average standards by age 16. The school sets itself challenging targets, reflecting its science specialist status, and usually achieves them. The 2006 GCSE and GNVQ results represent a significant improvement in standards, which are being sustained according to the school's internal monitoring. Pupils are now making good progress consistently across all subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well in relation to their capability. Pupils in the Resource Base for Hearing Impaired Pupils achieve well. Boys and girls both achieve well by the age of 16. The highest attaining students are now matching the good progress of others and the proportion of A and A* grades has increased in most subjects, some by a considerable amount.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is immediately apparent from the very positive ethos of the school. Some pupils have relatively limited academic aspirations and a relatively narrow world view. The school endeavours to broaden pupils' awareness of the world around them and to give them the confidence to consider how they might play a role within it. The school's international award gained in 2005 recognises the work it is doing in developing pupils' awareness of global issues and diversity. The ethos of the school reflects its clear and coherent values. The school embodies the idea that every child matters. Adults treat pupils respectfully and take their views very seriously, so pupils learn to respect themselves and others. Pupils treat each other fairly and have a well developed sense of right and wrong. The school successfully develops their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils' enjoyment of school is exceptional and this is reflected in their excellent attendance and very low levels of unauthorised absence. The school provides a secure environment in which pupils feel very safe. Behaviour is very good overall and any transgressions are dealt with firmly and fairly. The school has a strong anti-bullying policy. Bullying is rare and pupils are very confident in the school's ability to tackle effectively and quickly any problems that might arise. Pupils know the importance of a healthy diet and exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and put their knowledge into practice well. They are well prepared for their future economic well being through work related learning and by the opportunities they have to develop teamwork and enterprise skills. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community, particularly through their contributions to the school's self-evaluation, development planning and selection of new staff. Pupils are very strong ambassadors for the school because they know that their views are listened to. They are confident that there is an adult in school they can approach if they have a problem. One pupil felt strongly that an important factor in the growth of her confidence and character was the opportunity to make mistakes in a safe and supportive environment. Another had summed up the school's values when she said every pupil is treated 'as a unique individual'. Parents commented on the very helpful, caring and professional staff.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features. Teachers put a great deal of effort into planning and preparing well resourced lessons. The great majority of lessons are taught well with a significant minority being outstanding. Pupils are very keen to learn with many of them working to their full potential. Understanding pupils' needs is an outstanding feature of teaching and learning. The school has worked hard to develop the use of assessment, including peer and self assessment. This is now impacting positively on progress and attainment. Teachers make very effective use of detailed and relevant records on individual pupils' needs, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Most pupils respond positively and with enthusiasm in lessons because they feel that they and their contributions are valued. The majority feel that they are making good progress in their learning and the inspection team agree.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum and other activities is good, fulfilling statutory requirements as well as being innovative and responsive to local needs as a result of the school's inclusive approach to self-evaluation. Curriculum enrichment is very good with a wide variety of activities in and out of school, including a successful literacy summer school. The curriculum pathways in Key Stage 4 cater well for the different learning needs of older pupils, helping to raise achievement. They provide good levels of choice, including some vocational courses provided in other institutions. As a specialist science school, the curriculum has helped to raise achievement in science. It includes a variety of science courses to match different pupils' learning styles and a science summer school for gifted and talented Year 6 pupils. The greatest strength of the curriculum lies in coherence of subject-specific planning. The improvement in 2006 is partly due to the school's intensive programme of improvement for English, where standards rose significantly. A new initiative is ensuring that all subjects contribute to literacy development and is raising standards of writing and debate in subjects such as history, which has been a leader in this respect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The excellent care and guidance provided by the school has its foundation in the very high quality of relationships that exist between staff and pupils and which underpin the learning. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Effective training ensures that staff look out for the pastoral needs of all pupils and especially for those who are potentially vulnerable. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress is also outstanding. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported

by the learning development department and the resource base for hearing impaired pupils. The school is working closely with Connexions to ensure that careers advice reflects high aspirations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Very thoughtful and detailed planning and careful monitoring of progress have led to highly effective improvement programmes within departments and across the school. Improvements to the curriculum and the continuing excellence of care guidance and support have led to better standards and achievement. The significant improvement in its GCSE results in 2006 is the culmination of several years' work to get the conditions right for success. The governing body is effective in holding the school to account and the school offers exceptional value for money. Improvement since last inspection has been very good and the capacity for further improvement is exceptional. A new arrangement has allowed the whole school to benefit from the expertise residing in the resource base for hearing impaired pupils. The RBHIP is increasingly well integrated and the school promotes deaf culture by including British Sign Language versions of the departmental names on its doors and signs. The school is working energetically towards the Healthy Schools Award and helping pupils to understand cultures different to their own. The school offers exceptional value for money because achievement is very good and because of the outstanding way in which teachers are well deployed and encouraged to develop their expertise through wider experience. Its training school status encourages staff to be reflective and analytical and to add value through their research and development. The school also makes very good use of the skills of its premises team to reduce costs on minor works and grounds maintenance. The school has continued to operate smoothly and effectively in the short time since the death of its headteacher. The high standards of monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvement, established previously are being sustained by the acting headteacher and the senior management team, who demonstrate an outstanding capacity for improvement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

6 October 2005 Dear Pupils The Sweyne Park School Sir Walter Raleigh Way, Rayleigh, Essex. SS6 9BZ This letter is to tell you the results of your school's inspection. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your co-operation and help during our visit. You told us how much you like your school and how supportive your teachers are. We enjoyed talking to you and appreciated your comments. We enjoyed visiting the resource base for hearing impaired pupils, which is very good, and we were pleased to see signs in British Sign Language as well as French and German. You are privileged to attend a very good school that is really well run. The school believes that every one of you matters. It has a very good atmosphere and we were impressed by your maturity and by the fantastic quality of care and support you receive. You are treated with respect and your views are taken very seriously. Your very good attitudes and behaviour means that your teachers can try new ideas and plan interesting lessons. You are taught very well most of the time. Teachers assess your work carefully so you and they know what you need to learn next. All of this helps you to make very good progress, to help you to gain confidence and to prepare you well for the future. Mr Hodgkinson and the teachers we spoke to really understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and they know how to make it even better. They are very good at working out how to improve things. They plan changes carefully and constantly check that the new ideas are working. A good example is the way the English department has improved the GCSE results. We also felt that you have a better mix of lessons now. We agreed with the school about one area for improvement. This is to create better links with colleges and other schools so you have more vocational opportunities. We were sorry to hear that your headteacher had died recently and offer our condolences. We feel that everyone in the school has pulled together to help the school to carry on smoothly at such a sad time. We wish you all the best for the future. Yours sincerely Stephen Abbott HMI, Lead Inspector