



King Solomon High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102861
Local Authority Redbridge
Inspection number 296133
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Hartland HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Forest Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Barkingside
Age range of pupils	11–19		Ilford IG6 3HB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8501 2083
Number on roll (school)	909	Fax number	020 8559 9445
Number on roll (6th form)	191		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs D Lazarus
		Headteacher	Rabbi J Kennard
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	6–7 December 2006	296133

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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

King Solomon High School is a mixed Jewish secondary school. It is of an average size. Almost all pupils are from white backgrounds. A small number have English as an additional language or are eligible for free school meals. A very small number have statements of special educational need although an average number have learning difficulties or disabilities. Most pupils live locally. The attainment of those entering the school is average overall. The school gained the status of a specialist technology college in 1995 and took on an additional specialism in Humanities (English and geography) in April 2006. The headteacher will be leaving the school at the end of December 2006. A deputy headteacher at the school has been appointed as the acting headteacher until a substantive appointment is made.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

King Solomon is a satisfactory school with a number of good features. The school judges its overall effectiveness as satisfactory and inspectors agree. In a relatively short period of time the headteacher has provided good leadership in seeking to bring about necessary improvements, especially in developing systems and procedures for keeping checks on the students' progress so that there can be speedy intervention when any begin to fall short of what they are capable of achieving. He has been partially successful in changing the attitudes of the staff but has not met with sufficient co-operation across the school. Not all staff have come to share his belief that more rigorous systems and consistent and effective practices are needed if all students, especially the most able, are to do as well as they can. The staff are not yet working as a harmonious team in moving the school consistently in the right direction.

Overall the students achieve above average standards by the end of Year 11. They make good progress during their time at the school although the most able students do not all achieve as well as expected, particularly in English. The school is justly proud of its Jewish roots and status. The strong Jewish ethos results in an orderly community where every child matters. The personal development and well-being of the students is good. The care and guidance is good overall and excellent in the sixth form. There is a genuine concern for the development of the whole person, including the spiritual and moral as well as the intellectual and academic. The teaching is generally good but not all teachers provide students with regular guidance on what they need to do to improve. The checks made on the quality of teaching are not rigorous enough. The curriculum is satisfactory.

The school has made only satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Gaining specialist college status has brought significant improvements to the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) but a number of other areas still need further improvement, including the provision for more able students and the development of the students' independent learning skills, for these have not moved on sufficiently since the last inspection. The behaviour of some students also remains a cause for concern. With more consistently challenging, varied and imaginative teaching, better management of behaviour and more effective teamworking at all levels, the school could improve rapidly. The school has the potential, but not yet sufficient capacity, to be not only a good school but an outstanding school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The points score for the AS and A level courses are above average and a high proportion of students complete their courses. Students are set targets which are monitored well and most make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. Overall the quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. The students are well motivated and their skills are developed well to

enable them to achieve higher grades. The students receive good careers education and guidance and a high proportion progress to higher education. The curriculum is good. Although it is essentially academic and mostly linked to AS and A level, there are a broad range of courses on offer.

The school makes outstanding provision for the students' care and guidance and for the students' personal development. It is first-rate because they have so many opportunities to support younger students, to exercise leadership and express their views. They make a strong contribution to the school community and beyond. As one student put it, 'Education is really important and we have the support of those around to be successful.' Another said, 'Being here has helped me to develop confidence.' The students enjoy being at school and are very appreciative of the support they receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the provision for all students, particularly the most able, to ensure that all achieve the standards of which they are capable;
- Ensure teachers regularly provide students with guidance on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work;
- Develop more robust systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on the students' learning;
- Ensure the management structures provide effective communication and a clear, shared and coherent sense of direction to the work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, achievement and standards are good. The students start in Year 7 with standards that are average. They achieve above average standards and make good progress as they move through the school. By the end of Year 9, the students generally do well in national tests and usually reach above average standards, although they attained only average standards in 2005. The 2006 Year 9 results show an improvement on the previous year. An average number of more able students gain the highest grades, although too few in English. By the end of Year 11 an above average proportion of students gained at least 5 higher grades, A*-C at GCSE, with an increasing number gaining the highest grades. There remain a lower number than expected gaining the highest grades in English.

The students generally make good progress because they respond well to the teaching they receive and do what is asked of them. The school recognises that the most able students have not done as well as they could, especially in English, and has begun to introduce more precise systems to check on progress and to address any underachievement. Students with learning difficulties also make good progress. The school regularly meets or exceeds its targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Overall, personal development and well-being are good. Students are friendly and co-operative and develop positive relationships. Students' behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and they behave well around school. However, a few students are not sufficiently thoughtful or respectful towards each other or their teachers. Although there are instances of bullying, clear systems ensure that these are well handled. A small minority of lessons are disrupted by unsatisfactory behaviour which constrains learning. The new code of behaviour with rewards and sanctions is beginning to improve behaviour. Although the proportion of students on fixed term exclusions remains high, the number is diminishing. Students' attendance is above average. They enjoy opportunities to take on roles of responsibility such as membership of Year and school councils and acting as peer mentors and prefects.

Students are particularly enthusiastic about the sporting opportunities provided. Most students show positive attitudes to their education and want to succeed. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Jewish cultural development is very strong but the awareness of different cultural traditions is less strong. School and community links are good and effective use is made of the specialist college resources. Students show a keen concern for fair play and feel safe. They are aware of the need to lead healthy lifestyles. They know which foods are healthy but not all students develop a healthy lifestyle. Year 12 and 13 students make an outstanding contribution to the school, supporting younger students and successfully arranging social and charity events. Achievements in English, mathematics and ICT are generally successful in preparing students for the next stage of their education. However, a small minority of Year 11 students say that they lack confidence, feeling only partially prepared for life outside school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The teaching and learning are good and enable the students to achieve above average standards and to make good progress, but the quality varies from subject to subject. Many teachers continue to use more traditional approaches which suit the needs of most students, who are generally very passive learners. This style meets the demands of parents but inhibits the development of more independent ways of learning and does too little to create self-confident learners. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and are very adept at preparing students for external examinations. Planning is undertaken conscientiously, but usually focuses too much on the knowledge to be transmitted rather than on the needs of the learners.

Marking is regular and teachers often make it clear to students the levels they are achieving, but there is too little feedback which explains to the students what they need to do to improve their work. There is a clear relationship between the effectiveness of the teaching and the students' behaviour. In a number of lessons, particularly those for lower attaining students, there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction which results in students chatting and calling out. The management of this behaviour lacks consistency. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are generally good. The smaller group sizes and stronger relationships ensure that students make better progress than in the main school. However, few students leave with good independent learning skills, as there is too little time to make up for shortcomings in developing these skills in previous years.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum in the main school is sound and in the sixth form it is good. In the main school, the range of courses is appropriate and meets the aspirations of parents and students. The range of vocational courses available to students in Years 10 and 11 has improved. Although the school does not fully meet the statutory requirements for the teaching of citizenship, it has identified urgent action to remedy this. Students in Year 10 undertake work experience, but there are few other opportunities for them to experience the world of work.

There is good support from the Connexions service to make students aware of the options available to them post-16, but the school does not make sufficient effort to ensure that those for whom it does not cater in the sixth form gain places on courses elsewhere which cater for their needs. The sixth form offers a good range of academic AS and A2 courses, along with some vocational courses. These are well matched to the needs and aspirations of those students who stay on. Across the school, there is a wide range of activities outside lessons which are available to all students which contributes well to developing their self-confidence.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has a strong caring ethos. Students feel safe and well supported. New systems which track and evaluate students' academic and pastoral progress are bringing about improvement. Termly assessments take place. Students are helped to reach challenging targets. Well devised individual learning programmes, which are shared with staff and students, support well the work with students with learning difficulties and disabilities. These students are well monitored by the school and outside agencies.

Good guidance is offered to students about future career and life choices. Health and safety procedures are clear. A full range of risk assessments are undertaken and the

school is a safe environment. Child protection procedures meet current government requirements. Checks on personnel are carried out correctly and the school has a single central register. There are few records of racist incidents but they show that the school takes appropriate action when incidents are reported. The school effectively informs parents about their child's progress through annual reports and consultation evenings. Care and guidance in the sixth form is first-rate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school judges leadership and management to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. The headteacher has a strong commitment to both a Jewish and general education. He knows the school well and has put in place systems and structures to promote a stronger ethos for learning and to track progress more precisely. He has successfully maintained the record of good standards and developed the provision for ICT well. The school self-evaluation is only satisfactory as it is not yet sufficiently effective in bringing about necessary changes quickly enough. Weaknesses and inconsistencies in management and leadership have also resulted in the slow implementation of desired improvements. The ideal of all staff pulling together to ensure policies and action plans are consistently applied across all areas of the school is not yet a reality.

Effective systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching are not fully in place and so do not yet provide a clear picture of the impact on the students' learning. This lack of robust systems has meant that teaching is not improving fast enough to ensure all students achieve as well as they can. The information about the strengths and weaknesses in teaching is not secure enough to ensure training fully matches needs so that practice can be improved. However, departmental self-review systems are developing well. Many important new initiatives to bring about improvements have yet to become rooted and are not yet sufficiently rigorous.

Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. The school has managed the reduction of the deficit budget carefully. Overall management of the tight budget is secure. The re-formed governing body is working well. The governors are beginning to challenge the school leaders about identified weaknesses and take more account of parent's views. Whilst many of the parents are supportive of the school, a significant minority consider that behaviour in the school and the teaching in all subjects are still not good enough.

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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?	3	2
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	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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	2	

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?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	3	2
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	2	
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	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

I am writing following the inspectors visit to your school to let you know what we think. Thank you for your help in talking to us so openly about the work you do and what you think about the school. We think that your school is satisfactory overall and that it has a number of strengths.

As a result of the teaching and your hard work, you achieve high standards in examinations by the time you leave. You make good progress and achieve well. You make the most of the many opportunities the school offers. Most of you behave the way you should but a few of you do not behave well enough in school. We found that relationships between staff and students are good and the staff guide and support you well. You are well cared for and feel safe at school. Most of your parents are happy with the school and with what it provides.

We think that your headteacher provides good leadership and knows the ways to make the school even better. We have asked the acting headteacher and other school leaders to:

- ensure teaching improves for all of you, particularly for those of you who learn more easily, to ensure you all do as well as you can;
- make more checks on the quality of teaching;
- make sure that all staff understand what they must do to make the school a better place to be; and
- ensure teachers provide you with better guidance on what you need to do to improve the quality of your work.

You too can help by giving your best, all the time, especially those of you who let yourselves down by causing difficulties which prevents others from learning and being happy at school.

With every good wish.

Ian Hartland HMI