

Sedgehill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100743
Local Authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	307466
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1667
6th form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Brown
Headteacher	Ms K Bastick-Styles
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002
School address	Sedgehill Road London SE6 3QW
Telephone number	020 8698 8911
Fax number	020 8461 4004

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This very large school serves a culturally diverse community and has an attached unit for hearing impaired pupils. It has considerably more boys than girls and experiences slightly greater pupil mobility than most schools. Over half of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds with the largest group being of Black Caribbean heritage. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is high, as is the number of pupils with a statement for their special educational need. There are twenty looked-after children on roll. The school has specialist status for performing arts. The growing sixth form is part of a federation with two other schools in the local authority. The school is under-going a rebuilding programme, which has resulted in greatly reduced space for the students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Staff and governors are right in their judgement that Sedgehill is a good school. Pupils and parents are very positive about their school, noting that it has improved rapidly and developed some outstanding features in recent years under the determined leadership of the headteacher. Senior staff and governors have helped to establish a culture where the students come first and where underperformance is continually challenged. Improving achievement and the personal development of all students is at the heart of all that the school does.

Where underachievement is spotted, action is taken to ensure its elimination. It is greatly to the school's credit that no student is allowed to slip through the net. High quality support and guidance greatly reduce any difficulties they face. Rigorous systems identify their academic and personal needs and then lead to programmes tailored closely to the individual. This is particularly effective in supporting the progress of pupils with specific learning or language needs, including those with a hearing impairment. Very productive links with a wide range of agencies support this process. Performing arts status has enriched the curriculum with various artists in residence, and has extended artistic performances both within school and on tours. Art, music and drama have met most of their demanding academic targets as part of their contribution to the enhancement of the curriculum in this specialist school.

The constant drive to improve achievement means that, although teaching is good, teachers strive to make it even better. Achievement is good and improvements are being sustained. From slightly below average attainment on entry, students make good progress and standards have risen to broadly average. The proportion of students gaining at least five A*-C grades has doubled since the last inspection. The school sets itself challenging targets to improve standards further. Mathematics has seen less progress and GCSE results fell in 2007. There are positive signs from the action taken since then, but this has yet to be converted into sustained improvements in student achievement. The students' good personal qualities offset this weakness in mathematics, giving them a sound foundation for the future.

Current building work presents many challenges for staff and students. In spite of this, the school is calm because students understand how to behave responsibly. Younger students say they feel safe because older ones look out for them. Students are keen to do well and mostly enjoy school, although a small number of lessons are disturbed when teachers do not deal effectively with minor disturbances. Having slipped over the previous three years, attendance has improved because of the very rigorous approach the school has taken to eliminate persistent absence.

Rigorous monitoring is used to decide where performance needs to be improved and weaknesses eliminated. Initiatives are encouraged and are carefully evaluated and adapted where necessary. Under effective and much improved leadership and management at all levels, the school has made great strides forward in recent years. This vibrant and successful school is in a very strong position to become even better in all that it does.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to sixth form courses has been below average, but is now rising as GCSE results improve. Students achieve well and make good progress in response to good teaching. Standards are in line with national averages and rising. Students enjoy their sixth form

experience, and develop into mature and confident young adults, who are prepared well for the future. They make a considerable contribution to the school and the wider community such as through mentoring younger students and helping in local primary schools. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements to move students forward, although they do not always give them sufficient opportunity for independent learning. The school collaborates well with the other schools in the Hillside Federation and with other agencies including universities. Students benefit from being able to choose from a wide range of subjects, as well as a good variety of extra-curricular activities including opportunities for sport, drama and music. Students are very appreciative of the high quality support and guidance they receive from sixth form staff in helping to overcome personal and academic problems, and in making appropriate choices for the future. Systems for assessing, tracking and monitoring students' progress are regular and rigorous, which helps them to gain an accurate picture of their current standards and of what they need to do to improve. Sixth form leaders work well together, within the school and across the federation, to evaluate the provision, analyse its strengths and weaknesses and draw appropriate conclusions. Above all, they show a very strong commitment to individual students' progress and well-being. One Year 12 girl said: 'I feel respected and relaxed; I get all the help and support that I need and want, and feel that I can achieve'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the current action leads to sustained improvements in achievement and examination results in mathematics.
- Bring the quality of teaching in all lessons up to that of the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students make good progress during their time at the school, including those who stay on in increasing numbers into the sixth form. Test results for Year 9 students in 2007 were below average but represented improving progress for this group. Current school assessment data indicates that this improvement continues, and standards in Year 9 are rising to meet the school's ambitious targets. GCSE results also rose in 2007. Over half of the students gained five or more A*-C grades in 2007, but this figure fell to less than one-in-three when English and mathematics were included. Students made good progress in English, but this was not the case in mathematics where results fell to a low level. The school has identified that students were not suitably prepared for aspects of a new examination course. The impact of action taken to remedy this and to meet 2008 targets suggests standards are rising. Black Caribbean students, the main minority group, made better progress than others and their GCSE results were significantly above average. The school identifies White boys eligible for a free school meal as the group causing most concern. Focused attention including monthly monitoring of their progress towards their targets is starting to bear fruit. Current sixth form students are making good progress. Standards have risen over the last few years and were close to the national average in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students in Year 9 say, 'We really enjoy attending Sedgehill School, it gives us amazing opportunities'. Others say that it is a 'great community'. They have good opportunities to explore values and beliefs in assemblies and have well developed social skills. Strong support, tailored to individual need, is helping reduce the number of exclusions. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions for several years and the rate of fixed-period exclusions is low and falling. Students are emphatic that the school is a safe place and they know how to keep safe. They say, 'Lots of people help us'. They know the importance of healthy life-styles, but need to take more responsibility for eating well. Sixth form students play a significant role in the school community. Younger students comment, 'Older students look out for younger ones all the time'. The head boys and girls are passionate about their work. They make a valued contribution to the decision-making of the school taking on leading roles that prepare them well for the workplace. Members of 'Student Voice' say they like 'having a say' in how the school functions and, 'We like carrying the views of others and we can make a difference'. Their suggestions for changes in facilities have been taken up and their activities for charities managed very well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are aware of the style of teaching that best suits them and say, 'The teachers are very kind, friendly and approachable'. The school is fully aware of strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning because it monitors and evaluates lessons rigorously. The quality of learning is especially good where teachers plan to develop an idea in a way that quickly grabs the students' interest. In an outstanding lesson, a student said, 'We don't just sit and listen, we work out the problems ourselves, then teach others'. Lessons like this are lively, rapidly paced and challenging at different levels. Students respond enthusiastically, enjoy their tasks and so learn well. Less successful lessons are planned to focus on an activity rather than on learning and the pace of learning is slow. Here, there is a lack of demand and pride in completing work and presenting it well. Work is marked consistently and mainly with helpful comments. The best marking helps students know what is needed for improvement and checks that they act on any suggestions for improvement. This is not widespread. As a result, students often know their targets, but are sometimes unclear about how to improve the level or grade in a topic.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school rigorously reviews and adapts the programmes it offers to support its aim of meeting the academic and social needs of all students and developing a personalised curriculum. This includes offering talented students the chance to take additional GCSE examinations or to take

them early. It has made considerable strides in providing a wide variety of academic and vocational courses that are increasingly tailored to the aptitudes and interests of all students. Links with Lewisham College and the other schools in the Federation, have enabled the school to expand the opportunities it offers students. The school has also greatly improved information and communication technology (ICT) provision since the last inspection, and is now beginning to monitor the achievement of students at Key Stage 4. The new 'baccalaureate' course in Year 7, although in its very early stages, shows evidence of success in raising attainment. The very wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities helps to develop the students into well-rounded adults. The extensive range of school productions are highly regarded by students. Specialist school resources are used effectively in joint art and drama projects with local primary schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

'It is very hard to get lost in this school'. This quotation from a student typifies the impact of the high quality of care, guidance and support provided for all. Carefully gathered information about students is used extremely well to support them academically and behaviourally. Student's academic progress is regularly monitored and support is put in place should potential under-achievement be spotted. The school offers excellent support for those with learning difficulties. 'Spectrum' is an exceptional facility, which nurtures the more vulnerable and helps them to cope with mainstream education. The school has superb links with a myriad of outside agencies and uses these effectively to provide additional support, both at school and at home. Clear lines of communication and oversight of how all the complex aspects of support link together makes this into a very cohesive and efficient working model. The school believes passionately in family support and works extremely hard to ensure that families are involved in raising students' aspirations. The required procedures for health and safety and child protection are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has been transformed since the last inspection by highly effective leadership from the headteacher who has built a successful leadership team focused sharply on raising student achievement. The involvement of the governing body in the development of the school has improved dramatically, and has a greater impact than across the sixth form federation. Governors now carry out their responsibilities effectively as they are well informed of the school's qualities and are fully involved in forward planning. The commitment to improving their skills has been recognised by a local authority award. This helps them to provide informed challenge to the headteacher. The development of the role of subject leaders has had a significant impact on raising their skills and performance and has contributed to improvements in student achievement. Coaching and guidance by senior leaders are now being extended to year teams so that they have greater focus on improving pupil achievement than at present. The leadership group uses data intelligently to monitor student progress and this is now increasingly being used by teachers to inform their teaching. Despite its large size, the school knows its staff and students well.

The introduction of a new curriculum for Year 7 and the recent efforts to secure improvements in mathematics are examples of innovative leadership, which is focused on finding solutions to challenges the school faces.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

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

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?	2	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.

Annex A

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	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

21 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sedgehill School, London, SE6 3QW

Thank you for your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. We spoke with many of you in lessons, in groups or around the school. We thought you showed confidence and a strong sense of maturity. Everyone is coping very well with the building work going on around you. You said that you enjoy school and feel safe.

We agree with you that Sedgehill School is a good school with some outstanding features. It has improved in many ways in recent years, such as the considerable improvement in your access to computers and other new technology. You are doing well in your work and making good progress. The school is well led and managed and your headteacher is supported by hardworking staff and governors. By carefully assessing how well you are doing, teachers are able to make sure that the courses you study meet your needs and interests. You try hard in lessons, although parents and teachers are right when they say that a small number of you disturb the learning of others. You have good teachers who show considerable interest in your personal and academic development. They try hard to make sure that your learning needs are catered for and that all of you have the opportunity to succeed. There are plenty of opportunities for you to participate in sport and other activities.

The staff and governors are always looking to do even better. We think that there are things that can be even better so we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure that the recent improvements in mathematics are continued
- bring the quality of all teaching up to that in the best lessons.

You can help too. Continue to be good ambassadors for your school. Make sure that you try just as hard in mathematics as you do in your other subjects, as this is such an important subject for your future success. A small number of you could also attend more regularly.

Once again, many thanks. We wish you every success in the future and hope that the disruption caused by the building work is worth it.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Beale

Lead Inspector