

Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103521
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308347
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1010
6th form	250
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Speak
Headteacher	Kaye Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Jockey Road Sutton Coldfield B73 5PT
Telephone number	0121 3541479
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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

Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls is a selective school which is similar in size to most other secondary schools. Over half of the students are White British, with other students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are Indian, Pakistani and Caribbean. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is above the average but none are at an early stage of learning English. The proportions of students eligible for free schools meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are low. Approximately 30% of students in the sixth form qualify for the educational maintenance allowance. Students come from a very wide area, taking in much of Birmingham and beyond. The school became a specialist science college in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls is an outstanding and high attaining school, and there is no complacency. Students' outstanding achievement is the result of good teaching, an outstanding curriculum and the excellent guidance they are given, together with their own determination which is a response to the high quality expectations that are enshrined in the school's ethos.

The students are buzzing with enthusiasm and the school is a very welcoming environment with excellent displays of student artwork. The school is a harmonious community where diversity is respected and the personal development of students is given a high priority and is outstanding. Religious groups, such as the Christian Union and Islamic group, are led and run by students. Attendance and behaviour are exemplary. The students really enjoy school and are actively involved in all aspects of school life. They make an excellent contribution to the community, for example by raising money for a range of charities, supporting younger students through 'peer listening' and acting as prefects. The student council is thriving and has successfully changed the colour of the uniform as well as instigating other changes. Students receive outstanding care, support and guidance. Pastoral support is strong and very effective with plenty of opportunities for careers advice to support students in achieving their aspirations. Students are prepared well for their future, they are mature, confident, articulate and develop excellent leadership skills.

Specialist science status permeates the life of the school and has brought many benefits to the school. It has made an outstanding impact in raising standards and improving provision. Standards are exceptionally high throughout the school and students make excellent progress. Examination results in science and mathematics in both key stages are exceptionally high. At GCSE all students obtained an A* or A grade in biology, chemistry and physics. Science is a popular feature of the sixth form with substantial numbers studying these subjects. The curriculum has been enhanced with increasing numbers of science and mathematics courses. In addition, there are other opportunities for the students provided by the science weeks, family health day, master classes and mathematics challenges. There has been considerable investment in information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. The school received a national ICT award and in 2006 to 2007 was a lead school in ICT in Science. Through its science status the school has worked in partnership with local secondary and primary schools very successfully to improve the performance of these institutions.

Teaching and learning are good overall with an increasing number of outstanding lessons. The subject knowledge of teachers is excellent and they have high expectations of their students. However, the school recognises that some lessons result in students being passive in their learning with little opportunity to undertake a variety of learning strategies. The curriculum is outstanding and is continually being developed to reflect the needs of highly able students. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and this encourages students to become actively involved. They are well attended and reflect the wide interests of the students, which include opportunities to learn the sitar and be part of the gospel choir.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is ably supported by her strong senior leadership team. A key focus is the drive to continually raise the proportion of higher grades the students achieve and embed the specialist science vision. The senior team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for further development. It monitors the work of

departments closely. Governors are outstanding and take a keen interest in the quality of education provided by the school.

A high proportion of parents responded to the parental questionnaire and many were very positive and supportive of the school. Some students travel long distances each day in order to attend the school because of its excellent reputation. However, a significant minority raised concerns about the communication between parents and the school and the communication to students. The school is aware of this and has very recently circulated surveys to all parents and students as one way of seeking views and improving communication.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education where standards are exceptionally high. Nearly all students go on to university. The progress made by students from their excellent GCSE results is good. Students are offered a wide range of A- and AS-level courses. They are supplemented well with additional qualifications such as the Open University Young Applicants in School Scheme (YASS), allowing more able students the opportunity to take an undergraduate course. Hence, the curriculum is outstanding. The sixth form is very popular and oversubscribed, with some 20 students joining from other schools. Students are well prepared for their future life by the exceptional focus on their personal development. Sixth form students are excellent role models for younger students and ambassadors for the school. They very successfully take on a range of responsibilities such as running the cultural awareness society. They bubble with plenty of ideas and have set up and run their own clubs for Irish dancing and street dance. The students speak very highly of the individual support and care they receive from subject teachers, tutors and pastoral leaders. The monitoring and tracking of student progress is good but has not had the impact it does in the earlier years of the school in supporting the good teaching to ensure maximum progress. Leadership and management are good and the school recognises strategies to improve the performance in a few A- and AS-level courses need to focus much more on increasing the proportion of higher grades.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve communication with parents and students so they are better informed about the work of the school.
- Ensure students experience a wider range of teaching and learning strategies in their lessons.
- Improve the proportion of students achieving higher grades in a few A- and AS-level courses by the implementation of more effective strategies at both departmental and pastoral level.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enter the school with attainment which is well above the average. Standards are outstanding. By the end of Year 11 all students make outstanding progress. This includes students from minority ethnic groups including those for whom English is an additional language.

Results in national tests reported at the end of Year 9 are excellent in mathematics and science with many students achieving higher levels. This is especially the case in mathematics where these tests are taken a year early at the end of Year 8. In English, the proportion of students reaching the higher levels has been much lower. The literacy enhancement programme is now

effectively supporting younger students in developing higher order language skills and skills of comprehension.

Nearly all students gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. The proportion who gained five or more GCSE grades at A* to A in 2007 was 73%. Students are highly motivated to succeed and eager to learn. In 2007, two students scored one of the top five marks in the country in English Literature, French and Spanish. Two students scored full marks in written papers in mathematics and one was in the top 10 nationally for the subject.

Examination results for A- and AS-level courses are consistently high. Based on their excellent GCSE results students make good progress. While an increasing number of passes are at the high grades of A and B, a few courses have too many lower grades, especially subjects such as biology, chemistry and psychology. Sixth form students also achieve a number of additional qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. During their time in the school, students become articulate and confident. Students clearly enjoy school and take full advantage of all the opportunities open to them. Through personal, social, health and citizenship education, students acquire a very good awareness of the issues relating to health and personal safety, and know how to keep fit through sports and healthy eating. A large number participate in sport events and the rowing machines have been used to take part in national rowing competitions. This participation extends into the sixth form where students take part in yoga and volleyball. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding owing to the extensive opportunities they have to engage with additional activities and cultural events within school and in the wider community. Attendance and behaviour in lessons and around the school are exemplary and students feel safe because they are confident that adults take their concerns seriously and will respond to their needs. The students make a substantial contribution to the community, for example through mentoring activities and supporting local and international charities. They are consulted over the running of the school and their views are taken seriously and acted upon, school catering, uniform and picnic benches being a few examples. They are well prepared for the world of work. Standards in basic skills are outstanding and students develop enterprise and independent learning skills very effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most teachers teach lessons at a good pace with a high level of intellectual challenge underpinned by excellent subject knowledge. They have very high expectations of students, and teaching and learning take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teaching successfully encourages the students to think deeply for themselves about the subject matter on a wide variety of issues. Relationships between students and teachers are excellent. During the inspection most lessons seen were good or better. In the large majority of lessons, teachers are

successful in creating a classroom environment where students enjoy learning through stimulating activities. In these lessons, students are encouraged to assess their own and others' work to gain a clear understanding of their progress. Learning is consolidated well with effective use of questioning techniques. However, some lessons lack excitement and in these lessons students learn passively and are not fully challenged at their own level. There is a tendency for the teacher to talk too long with a limited variety of tasks to develop learning. Although the best feedback helps students reflect on their work and gives points for development, the marking in books is inconsistent across the school. The school is rightly focusing on widening the role of assessment to support students' understanding and to help them develop more independent learning styles.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It is kept under close review and adapted where necessary to ensure that it meets the needs of able learners and reflects the specialist science status. The impact of the school's specialist status is evident in the outreach work in local schools and in the opportunities for all students to study courses such as triple science in Year 10 and Year 11. The school is developing a curriculum that encourages challenge and progression. For example, in Key Stage 3 mathematics has been shortened to two years with national tests a year earlier in Year 8. As a result, students start GCSE mathematics alongside additional mathematics in Year 9.

Excellent extra-curricular provision and enrichment activities extend students' learning experiences and nurture their academic and personal development well. They also reflect the diversity of the students in the school. There is a high level of participation in the clubs and activities that operate every day. These include residentials, sporting events, religious societies and drama productions amongst many others. The library and the independent learning centre are particularly effective in the way they support students in their independent learning. Students are provided with excellent opportunities to develop work related education. All students in Year 10 and some Year 12 students undertake work experience. A cross-curricular programme helps students develop these skills in all subject areas.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The procedures for safeguarding are all in place, as are child protection procedures which are regularly reviewed and updated. The school site is safe and secure. Pastoral staff are open and welcoming and students know with whom to speak if troubled. The small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified promptly, receive appropriate support including close work with families and thus make excellent progress. Some learners who have English as an additional language are given lunchtime support through a developing literacy enhancement programme using well trained, enthusiastic sixth formers who receive ASDAN accreditation. Although attendance is high when compared with similar schools, the school is rigorous in its attempts to further raise levels. Exclusions are very low. Regular assessments mean that students and their parents are well informed on progress. Students' progress is tracked centrally, and pastoral

leaders have a clear overview of academic progress and work with department heads to ensure students achieve their potential. There are good induction programmes in place for both Year 7 and Year 12 students. Year 9 students are well advised on their subject choices and Year 11 students are given good guidance on progression to further education and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding and, together with the very strong senior leadership team, she provides the school with an excellent strategic vision. The school has a clear philosophy of high academic attainment that is developed alongside widening the educational experience of the students. Specialist science status drives the school's ethos and identity. School leaders have a secure knowledge of the strengths of the school and what areas need to be developed and improved. The school is data rich and monitoring of student progress is to be found in subject departments and pastoral systems. Management systems are strong and all health and safety protocols are in place. Systems are in place to drive forward policies and to monitor their effect. There is high staff morale.

Governance is outstanding, with a group of committed volunteers being professional critical friends to the school. The governors have clear plans for improvement and are dedicated to improving the sporting facilities and obtaining funding for a new sports hall. There is a careful plan of building and facilities renewal to ensure that the aged building is kept fit for purpose and that the students learn in the most pleasant of environments possible. Financial procedures are robust.

The school is providing outstanding value for money. There is an outstanding capacity to improve further with a focus on the development of the whole student to achieve their maximum potential both in academic lessons and as a person.

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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?	1	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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	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	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

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?	1	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	1	2
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	1	
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

Dear Students

Inspection of Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls, Sutton Coldfield, B73 5PT

I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave to my colleagues and me when we visited your school recently. Thank you for talking with us and giving us your views. You are rightly proud of your school. It is an outstanding school which prepares you well for your future lives. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and attendance, your positive attitudes to learning and the high quality of your artwork around the school. We think the leadership of the school is excellent.

The school is a harmonious community where different faiths and cultures are respected. You make an excellent contribution to the community. The student council did well to successfully get the colour of the uniform changed. All students receive outstanding care, support and guidance. Specialist science status is a key focus of the school and this has brought many benefits to you. Your achievements are outstanding. You do not just do well in examinations and GCSE courses, but also in other equally impressive awards and qualifications, such as YASS and the small group of girls in Year 9 who won the 'Healthy Tums in Brum' award. The range of extra-curricular activities is extensive and teaching is good. The subject knowledge of teachers is excellent and they have high expectations of you. Many of your parents are very positive and supportive of the school.

The sixth form provides a good quality of education. Sixth form students are excellent role models and ambassadors for the school. Examination results for A- and AS-level courses are exceptionally high.

The few things we have asked the school to attend to are:

- improve communication with parents and students so they have more information about the work of the school
- ensure you experience a wider range of activities in your lessons
- improve the proportion of higher grades in a few A- and AS-level courses.

Senior managers have a clear view of how the school is doing and where they can make improvements. The managers, teachers, governors and staff are very committed to their work.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Davinder Dosanjh Her Majesty's Inspector