

The Sutton School and Specialist College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103877
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	308445
Inspection date	6 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Frank Price

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Freda Sunter
Headteacher	David Bishop-Rowe
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2004
School address	Scotts Green Close Russells Hall Estate Dudley DY1 2DU
Telephone number	01384 818670
Fax number	01384 818671

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sutton School and Specialist College for Business and Enterprise is a special school for pupils with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, although there are increasing numbers of pupils who have more complex learning needs, such as those with autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural difficulties. The school has an outreach project which supports pupils from mainstream schools. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds and nearly half are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Sutton School and Specialist College is a good school. One of its many outstanding features is the drive, ambition and teamwork of the headteacher and senior leaders. This is an important factor in the current success of the school and its excellent capacity to improve further. They have succeeded in making the school a place where there are high expectations of pupils and they develop their self-confidence and self-esteem extremely effectively. As a result, pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They develop into articulate and confident young people. Pupils are actively involved in the life of the school and take a pride in their school. For example, pupils have designed their own school uniform and one pupil summed up his feelings by saying, 'I enjoy everything, you can't fault it.'

The care, support and guidance of pupils is excellent. Pupils are well prepared for learning and for later life through developing their independence skills and maturity through the Business and Enterprise status of the school. For example, they receive excellent opportunities to host events and visitors to the Business Centre and they relish these experiences, which contribute so much to the community. Pupils' personal achievements are eagerly celebrated by everyone. They work hard to gain points so that they can trade these in for rewards, which have been sponsored by local businesses and football clubs. The care and support shown for pupils who have more complex learning or behavioural difficulties is excellent. Their needs are carefully assessed and planned for. As a result these pupils make impressive progress in overcoming barriers to their learning, so that they are able to increase their participation in the life of the school. This level of support and care also extends to pupils who attend the school from other local schools or colleges for short-term placements.

Whilst the academic standards of pupils are well below average owing to the nature of their learning difficulties, their achievements and progress are good. This is because teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Relationships between pupils and staff are superb and this is demonstrated by the excellent improvement of the behaviour of pupils, who are keen to please staff. Pupils make outstanding progress in nationally accredited courses from Year 10 onwards. However, progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in English and mathematics across the school, although generally good, is not as strong. This is because the teaching of basic skills sometimes concentrates too much on mundane worksheet activities and pupils lose concentration on these tasks.

The outstanding curriculum has been reviewed extensively so that it fully meets the needs of pupils. The school recognised that in the past, pupils found it difficult to succeed in college courses when they left the school. Pupils now achieve in a wide range of academic and vocational courses, whilst at school, and are now much better prepared for the future.

Overall the leadership and management of the school are good and the Business and Enterprise specialism has been very well managed. Enterprise related activities have enabled pupils to develop their personal skills and to be extremely well prepared for their future economic well-being. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' progress and achievement in Years 7 to 9 and in English and mathematics across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall, pupils' achievements are good. In Key Stage 4, pupils' achievements are outstanding. Pupils leave school with a good range of nationally accredited awards. They do particularly well in non-literacy-based subjects such as art, physical education (PE) and science. Pupils achieve well in vocational courses such as sport, construction and hospitality. The achievements of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and in English and mathematics across the school are good, rather than outstanding, because the teaching of basic skills is not as strong as in other subjects. Pupils make good progress in achieving their individual targets and many exceed their predicted targets. Effective analysis of data by the school shows that all pupils, regardless of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities, gender or background, make equally good progress. For example, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress through specialist and structured teaching, enabling them to make good gains in their communication and understanding skills and self-confidence. Pupils make exceptional progress in developing their independence, confidence and behaviour through the opportunities afforded through the Business and Enterprise status. Pupils thrive on the responsibility given to them, so that they can host a wide range of visitors and develop their numeracy and literacy skills in real situations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' excellent personal development is a key strength of the school. They develop an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to take part in a wide range of sporting and physical activities both during PE lessons and at break times. Pupils show an excellent understanding of a balanced diet and increasingly select healthy lunches and snacks. They have a range of good opportunities to explore other cultures and well-planned assemblies concentrate on spiritual, moral and social aspects of life. Pupils take part in a very wide range of activities, which promotes their personal development and enjoyment of school positively.

Pupils take increasing responsibility for their own learning, and preparation for the world of work is excellent. The school council is very active and pupils develop decision-making skills through this forum. Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their extremely positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. They talk in glowing terms about their school, with one pupil commenting, 'This is the best school ever.' Behaviour is excellent and pupils are extremely courteous, helpful and friendly. Pupils feel safe at school, knowing that any concerns are dealt with swiftly.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The major strength of teaching is the excellent quality of relationships between staff and pupils. This does much to instil confidence into pupils and provides them with the security to succeed

in a range of situations. Teaching is particularly strong in the creative and performing arts, vocational subjects, information and communication technology (ICT), and personal, social and health education. High but appropriate expectations are set for pupils and they respond well to these. For example, in one ICT lesson, pupils developed their skills and understanding of the importance of giving precise instructions for a computerised device to follow. Teachers use ICT, particularly the interactive whiteboards, to enhance teaching and learning very effectively. However, teaching in English and mathematics across the school is not consistently strong, with an over-reliance of worksheet based activities. Support staff are used very effectively to ensure pupils receive the help they need, and planning to meet the wide range of needs of pupils is very thorough. The use of specialist teaching strategies, for example, the use of visual symbols for pupils with additional needs, is excellent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum prepares pupils for the future exceptionally well. The opportunities for pupils to gain a wide range of accredited qualifications in academic and vocational subjects are first rate. The Business and Enterprise status has provided excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in decision making, team work and independence skills, preparing them very effectively for the future. Pupils have good opportunities to participate in work related experiences either within the Business Centre or with local employers. The personal, social and health education programme has been carefully thought out so that pupils understand how to lead healthier and safer lifestyles, for example, by learning about the risks of substance misuse and the importance of taking exercise. The curriculum is enriched by activities at break time and lunchtimes and pupils have opportunities to participate in at least one residential activity during their time at school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils have excellent relationships with staff, and the very effective guidance and support they receive makes a strong contribution in helping pupils to overcome any barriers to learning. Pupils have a good range of social and academic targets. They know what these targets are and what they need to do to achieve them. The rewards and sanctions system is understood by pupils and has a positive effect on helping them improve their behaviour. Pupils using the autism and learning support bases are particularly well supported to achieve their targets, which are in individualised symbol formats. Parents appreciate the excellent links with home, which enables them to support their pupils' individual targets. Child protection procedures are rigorous and there is an excellent level of training and expertise throughout the school. The school has excellent links with a wide range of outside agencies such as schools, colleges and local businesses, and these partnerships are beneficial in widening pupils' opportunities and experiences. It also provides good support for pupils in other schools and colleges who are experiencing difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and his supportive senior management team provide confident, energetic and assured leadership. They have an exceptionally clear vision for the school, and improvement

planning provides a good vehicle for achieving this and for continuous improvement. The Business and Enterprise status has been very well led and managed, so that the accommodation and resources provide excellent facilities for pupils to benefit from, such as the new music room and studio. Whole school targets for the specialist school status have been achieved. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and ensures that the school knows its strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the school is aware that the teaching of English and mathematics and the better use of marking are areas for development. Assessment information on pupils' progress has been analysed well to pinpoint where improvements are needed. The governing body provides both support and, where necessary, challenge. It holds the headteacher to account very effectively. The dynamic nature and the abilities of the senior leadership team mean that the school has the capacity to be outstanding in all areas.

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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
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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 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	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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

7 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sutton School and Specialist College, Dudley DY1 2DU

My colleague, Belinda Logan, and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your good school. We were both extremely impressed by your helpfulness, maturity and excellent behaviour. You are a credit to your school. You are looked after extremely well by all the staff in the school and they make sure that you are well placed to learn as well as you can. Your personal development is extremely impressive and you enjoy taking on responsibility such as showing visitors around and hosting events in the Business Centre. You make good progress in your academic work and by the time you leave school you have achieved a good range of nationally recognised qualifications. You do so well because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers know you very well and how to get the best out of you. The range of courses that you can follow from the age of 14 is excellent; you can study both academic and vocational courses and these give you a good opportunity to be successful.

The headteacher and all the staff work hard to make the school as good as it can be. The headteacher and the senior managers are good at leading the school and they have helped to make it an exciting and enjoyable place to be, and many of you told us how much you liked school. You do exceptionally well from the age of 14 onwards. To make the school even better I have asked its leaders to make sure that you do equally well from the ages of 11 to 14 and in mathematics and English in all year groups. You can play your part in helping the school improve by continuing to be so helpful and working hard in lessons.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Frank Price Lead inspector

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Lead inspector