

Southfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110191
Local Authority	Wokingham Borough Council
Inspection number	310218
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Hammond
Headteacher	Mr Michael Pedley
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Gipsy Lane Wokingham RG40 2HR
Telephone number	0118 9771 293
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This co-educational day/residential school caters for young people who have statements of special educational needs for their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Students come from eight different local authorities and many are known to the youth offending teams. Most students have come from socially deprived areas and nearly a half of students are entitled to free school meals. Almost all students come from White British backgrounds and there have been no girls for a number of years. Currently five students are looked after by a local authority. The school is part of a local secondary schools foundation. The school has gained the Sportsmark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This school provides a good education and continually strives to improve the learning opportunities for all its students. Good leadership and management promote good quality care and education with student achievement being at the heart of all planning. The headteacher and senior leadership team work effectively together and share a clear strategic vision for improvement. Middle managers have clear roles and responsibilities and enthusiastically share the drive for school improvement. The school runs smoothly, enabling students to make the best of their learning opportunities. Monitoring and evaluation are well focused on improving provision and establishing effective procedures that are having a positive impact upon student achievement. The capacity for the school to improve is good. All staff are dedicated to improving the life chances for all students and this is clearly recognized by both students and their parents/carers. A parent wrote, 'I would just like to say that I think the school is amazing. The staff have been a life saver when things have been hard and they could not have helped us more. They are great'.

Students' attainment on entry is usually below the national average, as a result of poor attendance and the consequences of their poor behaviour. By the end of Year 9, students are attaining national average results in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). When students leave the school they are demonstrating broadly average standards and many do well in their GCSE examinations, work related learning and vocationally accredited courses at college. Given their below average starting points, the achievement and progress of the students are good. They develop confidence through their successes and this helps to support their social and emotional development. Individual targets are monitored daily and students make good progress in meeting their challenge. Students' good overall progress is due to the excellent relationships, teamwork, effective teaching, and the good care, support and guidance they receive for their individual needs. Students are assessed carefully on entry to identify their learning and behavioural needs and relevant arrangements are made to help ensure they can make the best progress they are capable of while at school. The school is addressing the need to track and analyse the information it has on students' progress more thoroughly, to help identify which learning strategies are needed to ensure continued good progress. Students' behaviour is satisfactory. There are clear expectations of their behaviour, but staff practices are not always consistent and successful in minimalising inappropriate attitudes and behaviour.

The good curriculum offers a range of relevant learning opportunities that promote good academic progress and personal development. Visiting specialists offer effective support for students' learning and there are well-planned and outstanding opportunities for students to study a range of vocational and work-related activities. Activities very effectively support students' personal skills and confidence while preparing them for further education or the world of work. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are encouraged to have positive attitudes and empathy towards each other and they learn to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Attitudes to learning are generally good and most students engage enthusiastically in all activities. Overall attendance is unsatisfactory although many students make good and even excellent improvements in their rate of attendance, which are encouraged and rewarded. One student said: 'I never liked school so I didn't go. My attendance here is 100%'. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to improve in all areas. There has been particularly good progress in the provision for science and in the

relevance of the curriculum for older students. The governors are fully involved in the monitoring, evaluating and strategic management of the school. Partnerships with external support agencies are excellent and ensure that the individual needs of all students are effectively supported.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Students respond very well to the warm, family feel of the provision. There is a high standard of care, and child protection procedures are clear and effective. The action points identified in the most recent inspection have been fully addressed. Leadership and management are good and school and residential managers work very effectively together to ensure the progress and well-being of boarders. Students say they are listened to by adults and feel safe and secure. The residential curriculum is very well planned and provides varied opportunities that support students' personal development, which students say they really enjoy. The National Minimum Standards for residential special schools are fully met.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' attendance.
- Track and analyse students' progress more rigorously to identify what helps them to make the best possible progress.
- Improve the consistency of behaviour management across the school to ensure students understand the consequences of their actions and can maximise their learning opportunities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good gains in English, mathematics, science, ICT and in their social and personal skills. Students say they make good progress because of the support they receive in the small groups. A parent said, 'My son has made good progress in his reading and really enjoys his time at college. We have seen an improvement in his behaviour at home, he talks about things calmly, and listens more'. Students have challenging targets for improvement, which most achieve successfully. They are given clear advice and support in lessons about what they need to do to progress, although the marking of work does not consistently offer suggestions for improvement. All students have the opportunity to achieve a range of relevant academic and vocational accreditation by the time they leave the school and are well prepared to take on the challenges of further education or the world of work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Excellent relationships and mutual respect between staff and students result in a very positive and supportive environment. Most students have positive attitudes in lessons and appreciate the individual support they receive. One student said, 'They treat you like an adult here and don't shout'. The curriculum effectively encourages and promotes students to reflect on the lives of others and consider their own place in society. Students often show loyalty and support for each other and will take responsibility whenever they are able, for example, being a school council member. Behaviour is satisfactory. Students understand their rights and responsibilities and increasingly understand the importance of managing their own learning and behaviour. They know how to keep themselves healthy and safe, and understand the importance of regular exercise and healthy

eating. Students learn very useful skills through the excellent work-related and training opportunities and their increasing confidence and self-belief are helping to create a much more optimistic future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good which results in students making good progress. Staff know students very well and most use this knowledge wisely to plan and deliver their lessons. Managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning and have clear expectations of classroom practice. However, the very best practice, particularly in terms of managing behaviour and the use of assessment information in planning, is not consistent. The excellent relationships between staff and students ensure there is a very positive learning environment, where students gain confidence and are encouraged to 'have a go' at challenging activities. A parent said, 'The teaching strategies and care and support the school offers are very good.' Ongoing feedback and support in lessons by teachers and the very effective support assistants make it very clear to students how they might improve. Excellent teamwork, a developing understanding of different learning styles and very good use of resources, ensure that all students get the best out of their learning opportunities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is generally pertinent to the learning needs of students and is constantly under review to ensure it considers their ever-changing needs. Students' personal and emotional development is effectively supported through well planned activities that encourage their social maturity and leads them to consider the consequences of their actions. Activities are generally motivating and offer good support for students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT across all subjects. There is an appropriate emphasis on the importance of keeping healthy and taking exercise, and sporting activities effectively supports teamwork. The school accesses an excellent range of external provision that very effectively supports students' learning. A local outdoor activity centre offers exciting physical challenges and opportunities of working with animals and achieving accreditation. Students can study a wide range of accredited vocational courses at college in work related areas such as construction, plumbing, painting, sports management and catering. There are excellent partnerships with local businesses and employers who offer students work experience placements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The combination of efficient procedures and practice keeps students safe and secure while promoting their skills of self-management. There are effective measures for safeguarding students, which are clearly understood by all staff. Personal respect and trust are emphasised at all times and students receive effective individual guidance that ensures that they make good progress in their personal and academic development. The school is aware of the need to improve the attendance of a number of students as it affects their overall progress and achievement. The school maintains effective communication with students' homes, which parents greatly appreciate. A parent commented, 'I feel I can go to the school and speak with

a teacher or the headteacher if I am not happy with something'. Parents appreciate the positive phone calls and regular 'good news' contacts they receive from school. All staff work very efficiently together to ensure school provision is always effectively supporting students' personal welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are effectively improving provision and the headteacher and senior staff provide positive motivation to both students and staff. All staff are fully committed to fulfilling their responsibilities and the impact of their work is clearly reflected in the effective care, guidance and support for students and the good personal and academic progress they make. The work of all staff is valued. They are encouraged to explore their own learning and morale is high. The best practice in terms of behaviour management and teaching and learning is not shared sufficiently effectively to ensure consistency across the school. Through self-evaluation and the effective support from external consultancy and the school's adviser, areas for improvement are clearly identified, resulting in appropriate development planning and action. Resources are continually improving and are effectively utilised. Performance management for all staff leads to relevant training and professional development, and is clearly based upon school improvement. Parents and students know the school has their best interests at heart.

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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
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 effectiveness of boarding provision	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	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	4
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	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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	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	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

21 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Southfield School, Wokingham, RG40 2HR

I would like to thank those students who made me feel welcome during my visit to your school and a special mention must go to the members of the school council who represented their school very maturely. I agree with you and your parents: your school is good and it does all it can to support your academic needs and your personal development. The school knows how it can improve further and you can help by attending every day, behaving the best you can, and working hard towards achieving your personal targets. The following are some of the strengths of the school.

- All staff ensure the smooth running of the school and your care and support are central to all their planning and actions.
- You are treated with respect and you generally show respect in return.
- You get on really well with each other and all adults.
- You understand the school rules, which help to keep you safe and secure.
- You enjoy practical activities and make good progress in your learning.
- The curriculum effectively meets your needs and you enjoy attending college, work experience, and learning useful skills that will help you when you leave school.
- The school works very well with other people to help support your needs.
- The school is always thinking how to improve and help you make even better progress.

I have asked the school to consider the following areas for improvement.

- To help those of you who need to improve your attendance.
- To keep a close watch on your progress to identify what helps you make the best possible progress.
- To ensure that all staff are consistent in their expectations and management of your behaviour.

I had an enjoyable two days and I sincerely wish you all every future success.

Yours faithfully

Mike Smith

Lead Inspector