

Sundorne School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123569
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	314641
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	462
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Walton
Headteacher	Michael Dunning
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2004
School address	Corndon Crescent Sundorne Shrewsbury SY1 4LL
Telephone number	01743 276700
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sundorne School and Sports College is much smaller than most secondary schools and serves an urban area in the north of Shrewsbury. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all students are White British although a small number are from Eastern Europe and are in the early stages of learning English. The school achieved specialist status as a sports college in 2005 and has a second specialism in science.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sundorne School and Sports College is a good school which enhances the life chances of the students that attend. The students recognise this and enjoy school. A considerable strength is the good progress made by students in many subjects and across both key stages. Within this, the performance of the mathematics and science departments is especially strong. Both subjects have managed to attain results that are well within the top 10% of all schools nationally on more than one occasion in the last few years.

The headteacher leads the school with professional integrity and sensitivity to the needs of the students. This has helped the school to focus strongly on students' progress and care. His style of leadership is secure but is also overly informal at times and because of this, the school's strategic plan lacks specific timings or targets. These features are present in individual departmental plans but result in an occasional lack of consistency and clarity about who is responsible for what within the school and subsequently on deciding the next priorities. For example, lesson observations are completed but the outcomes are not always used systematically in forming overall plans and priorities.

The school uses its specialist status well to develop the curriculum, especially in physical education, extend activities and build stronger links with other schools and the community. It has become a local focus for sporting activities, involving various community groups. Some subjects, such as dance, are becoming increasingly popular with students. Standards in physical education are above average and students' awareness of the need to follow a healthy lifestyle has improved.

Progress since the last inspection has been good, although there are some lingering concerns about the quality of the acts of daily worship. Current arrangements for the reporting of citizenship are inadequate. The school offers good value for money and, with the strong shared leadership, has a good capacity to improve further. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive but also have some concerns about poor behaviour at times.

Teaching is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. Teaching quality is then thoughtfully developed, using coaching sessions and reviews to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. The school recognises that there are some variations, that some lessons lack sparkle and some subjects require improvement such as religious education and some aspects of English, especially literature. Although there are some good examples, such as in science, weaker literacy skills are not always improved enough in other subjects.

Standards are in line with the national averages but students achieve well. There are variations in the results achieved in GCSE examinations between subjects and girls tend to do better than boys, especially at the higher grades. Students respond well when set challenging targets and do especially well in mathematics and science. In the few subjects where results are less impressive, students tend to work to the lower expectations they are given. Students' progress in Years 7 to 11 is good overall and some is outstanding, although there have been fluctuations in performance in English over recent years. The careful tracking of students' progress and the detailed analysis of data are used to identify students who are in danger of underachieving so that appropriate support can be given.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all statutory requirements are met with regard to a daily act of collective worship and the reporting of citizenship.
- Iron out inconsistencies between departments through more rigorous monitoring of performance.
- Use the outcomes of the school's monitoring activities more effectively to drive the school's strategic planning to help raise standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When students start school, they have attainment that is slightly below national averages but with some fragility in their literacy skills that restrict their performance, especially for boys. Despite this, achievement is good and standards are broadly average by the time they leave school at age 16. In some key departments, students' progress is close to being outstanding. This is evident, in particular, in science, mathematics, physical education and art. The results in 2007 were the best in the school's history and over half of all students gained the equivalent of five or more GCSE examination grades A* to C including English and mathematics. This success is especially evident in strong performances in mathematics and science where the school has often featured in the top 10% of all schools nationally for the progress of students in these subjects. The progress made in Key Stage 3 is also good. However, despite this strong progress, the standards reached remain broadly average in comparison with other schools and the school has experienced some inconsistent patterns of results in previous years, especially in English.

The performance of boys is often below that of girls because of insecurities in their basic literacy skills that limit their achievement in many subjects. This is especially the case for lower and average ability boys. There are also some remaining concerns about the performance of the religious education department, where students make less progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Most students clearly enjoy school and behave well, although a few do not. Students like the wide variety of clubs and activities, especially sport, and many participate in out-of-school activities.

Students feel safe; there are trained 'buddies', and students know whom to turn to for support. Around school, relationships are satisfactory but the school, parents and students acknowledge that some students exhibit boisterous behaviour which frustrates other students. Good strategies to improve the attitudes and behaviour of these students have been introduced. These are beginning to be effective, not least in significantly reducing exclusions, although the school still occasionally punishes whole groups for the misdemeanours of a few.

Attendance is close to the national average. Students are given incentives to attend but some parents condone absence, which restricts those students' achievements.

The school has used its status as a specialist sports college to widen and support the curriculum and cultivate links with the community. For example, some students in Years 10 and 11 use their work-related learning opportunities to benefit the community and contribute to charitable work. Students are well prepared for their economic well-being, helped by strong use of

information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematical knowledge, and a well-planned programme of work experience and guidance sessions.

Members of the school council have been effective in bringing improvements to the school environment. For example, they have influenced the variety and balance of food offered at lunchtime, which has improved students' awareness of healthy living.

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is satisfactory. They have limited opportunities to gain a wider respect and knowledge of different cultures to encourage them to appreciate the lives of others. Their spiritual experiences are not considered enough in the planning of lessons, although in their life-skills lessons, students investigate a range of moral and social issues such as drug abuse, sex and drinking alcohol.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. An exceptionally thoughtful staff development programme has established a culture of continuous improvement. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to teach structured and purposeful lesson activities although, despite recent improvements, a few teachers still rely on over-lengthy introductions at the expense of more effective summary sessions. This limits the development of students' literacy skills and understanding. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning as, for example, by identifying Shakespeare's imagery and reporting back their findings in one Year 9 session. However, a minority of lessons do not provide students with work that meets their diverse needs.

Relationships between students and teachers are positive. Most teachers use effective questioning to check on learning and challenge the more able students, although the school's plans to develop this are at an early stage. Teachers use ICT well to stimulate and motivate students where possible, but the use of interactive technology to add sparkle to lessons is inconsistent across the school. Where it is used, it is used well. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson, particularly effective use was made of digital projection to demonstrate the painting style of Van Gogh.

Teaching assistants provide good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, in mathematics, teaching assistants are deployed well to support individual students identified at risk of underachieving. The school's use of assessment information to set targets and monitor students' progress is good.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The provision and use of ICT is extensive and well managed, and enhances a good range of subjects. There are good opportunities for work-related learning, and the curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been broadened recently to include some vocational pathways. There is good provision of enterprise opportunities to develop students' economic well-being although plans for introducing the 14–19 diploma are underdeveloped. An extensive range of extra-curricular provision is valued by students and contributes to their enjoyment of school. The specialist college status is reflected in the inclusion of several linked courses. The school is responsive to the needs of the community through courses such as the junior sports leadership award,

which includes work with younger pupils. This builds up the confidence of students as well as encouraging independent learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students receive good pastoral support. The school has strong links with outside agencies, ensuring those at risk are well supported. Transfer arrangements to Year 7 are good. Older students receive effective guidance on their future career pathways. There are good links with post-16 providers. Careers education and guidance is comprehensive and enhanced by good links with work-based training providers and the Connexions service. Academic guidance is also well developed. For example, nearly all students know their targets and most, but not all, marking indicates how they can improve their work. The system for tracking and monitoring students' progress is good and especially so in mathematics and science, resulting in students' very strong progress. Child protection and other safeguarding procedures are in place and understood by staff. The school's health and safety procedures and risk assessment systems are good and effectively monitored.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good. As a small secondary school, there is a tradition of shared leadership in school. The current headteacher has worked hard to achieve this collaborative ethos in school, which is bringing success. A strong leadership team supports him very well. Consequently, the school has made significant progress in recent years and its capacity to continue this is good. The contribution to leadership by a small team of middle managers is especially valuable and shows a detailed and accurate awareness of the relative strengths and weaknesses in school. There is, however, a variation in the depth and rigour of monitoring by departmental leaders and the quality of departmental planning, with some outstanding examples and others that are out of date and pedestrian. School leaders recognise that reducing this inconsistency is the school's next priority. The reporting of citizenship, for example, does not meet requirements, despite recent welcome additions to the curriculum in that subject.

Governors contribute satisfactorily to the school's development and offer regular challenge to school leaders on the school's overall performance. Currently, the headteacher reports to governors through weekly newsletters, with occasional additional reports. Although satisfactory in communicating information, this practice limits discussion about the bigger picture and restricts their contribution to overall strategic direction.

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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?	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	3
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	2

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	2
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	3
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	3
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

25 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sundorne School and Sports College, Shrewsbury SY1 4LL

As you may recall, a team of inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing to inform you all of our findings and to thank you for your contribution to the inspection.

You attend a good school. We were very impressed by the welcome and positive attitudes that you showed us. You behave well. Most of you are keen to do well and appreciate the hard work and support your teachers and others show to you. We are aware that the behaviour of a few frustrates the rest of you and spoils it for the many.

The standards you reach are broadly average but you make good progress. In some subjects, such as science and mathematics, your progress is close to being outstanding. This puts you in a good position for future work and studies, which is a credit to the school. We were also impressed with the thoughtful way the school's leaders have used its specialist status to improve physical education in the school.

However, there are also some things that can be improved and these are listed below.

- Ensure all statutory requirements are met with regard to a daily act of collective worship and the reporting of citizenship. This is a requirement of all schools.
- Iron out inconsistencies between departments through more rigorous monitoring of performance. This requires leaders in school to make sure all departments are working at the same level as the best. This is fair for those students studying those subjects, especially at GCSE.
- Increase the level of ambition in targets when compiling school plans to help to continue driving up standards

We hope this helps and would like to wish you well in the future.

Kind regards

Ceri Morgan Her Majesty's Inspector



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