

Southgate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102047
Local Authority	Enfield
Inspection number	323576
Inspection date	11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Carmen Rodney HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1518
Sixth form	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Gordon Stubberfield
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Wilde
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2006
School address	Sussex Way Cockfosters Barnet EN4 0BL
Telephone number	020 8449 9583
Fax number	020 8441 6424

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated:

- the progress of students of Caribbean and African descent and White backgrounds other than British
- the measures that the school is taking to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students
- the plans to improve the 14-19 curriculum
- the level of teachers' expectations to ensure that individuals and different groups of students can make at least good progress, consistently.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, the leadership team, a selection of middle managers and members of staff; students, parents, and the chair of governors. Parts of lessons were observed, documents, including the school development plan, minutes of governors meetings, whole-school and subject reviews, external reports and policies, and parents' questionnaires were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Southgate School is very large, heavily oversubscribed with at least six applications for every place. Students are drawn from diverse backgrounds; with well over half coming from minority ethnic heritages and having a first language believed not to be English but few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The largest single group of students are White British and other White backgrounds. There are slightly more boys than girls. At least one-tenth of students are entitled to free school meals; the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average as are the numbers of those with a statement of special educational need. Students' main learning difficulties are dyslexia, autism, moderate, profound and multiple learning; physical as well as behavioural, emotional and social. The school has held specialist school status in science since 2004 and provides extended services which are used very much by the local and wider community. The school has received several awards, including Artsmark, Healthy Schools, NACE and Green Flag Status and is currently working towards achieving the official recognition for sustainability.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Southgate is an outstanding school that helps its students to achieve exceptionally well. Since the last inspection in 2006, the school has successfully accomplished the quest to ensure that its students, drawn from diverse backgrounds and with many differing needs, can exceed expected standards based on their starting points.

Standards are well above average in all key stages and students' performance has consistently exceeded expectations over the last three years. For example, in 2008, students surpassed the very challenging targets set at the end of Key Stage 3 particularly in English and mathematics where the unvalidated results were exceptionally high. Similarly, the GCSE scores were significantly much higher than the national averages. Students achieve exceptionally well and are far ahead in their learning because of the exceptional leadership of the headteacher and senior and middle managers who are very well supported by all staff. Highly effective team work is established through distributing responsibilities. Together, leaders and staff have created a community that is highly focused on learning so that every student, irrespective of their ethnicity, ability or learning need can make rapid progress. Students' outstanding achievement verifies the inclusive ethos within this close and caring community school.

Central to the highly effective leadership is the passion that staff exude about high achievement and which, in turn, students and their parents have imbued. The message about partnership work between the home and school comes across strongly in the overwhelmingly positive response to the parents' questionnaire and in the discussion with a group of parents, representative of the school population. The school has an excellent partnership with parents and this comment from one parent exemplifies the high regard they have for all aspects of the school's work: 'Every day my child comes home and can't wait to tell me about her day, saying things like, and;quot;l love my schooland;quot;. That speaks volumes to me!'

The senior team's ability to state clearly its strategic plan for the school has contributed to all staff taking ownership for raising standards. Priorities for improvement and targeted actions are clearly defined and linked to evaluative self-review and well-considered planning. The school is reflective and highly self-critical and, as a result, action research and documents on changes are pursued rigorously. The attention to detail underpins the success of this school, particularly as actions are deliberated and linked to the needs of the school and its aspirational community. A good example is the purposeful curriculum planning by staff and governors, so that the 14-19 curriculum and other initiatives can be used for the benefit of students.

The quality of teaching and learning is exemplary in many respects; it is highly responsive to students' needs as teachers use their very good subject knowledge expertly to promote students' independence and accelerate their progress. Students describe their teachers as 'special cogs in the machine' and confirm that they learn very well because their teachers 'use different techniques; adapt different styles such as visual, auditory and active sessions'. Additionally, teachers give students clear aims at the start of lessons which they can evaluate at the end to identify how much they have learnt. This responsive approach to personalising learning to meet students' needs demonstrates clarity of purpose. This is combined effectively with the rigorous use of assessment data to track students' progress and provide support which culminate in excellent teaching over time and in students making outstanding progress.

The school is well informed about enthusing students' desire for learning. A broad curriculum with accelerated pathways for Year 9 students and wide-ranging enrichment activities involve

students; they gain experience about the world of work and insight into living in a diverse society as well as understanding concepts around sustainability. These experiences provide a balanced educational timetable that is outstandingly good and makes a significant contribution to students' personal development. The impact of the school's specialist status is of a good quality; it is recognised and highly respected locally and further afield. The impact of the school's specialist status is under review as managers seek ways to increase the outcomes and make the school a centre of scientific activities in the locality. Senior managers spread the benefit of the specialist status widely through partnership work with Imperial College and local schools by using the professional expertise of renowned scientists who serve the school very well in different capacities.

Students are given first-rate opportunities that are character building. They are highly motivated and confident and because they understand the school's adage, 'know thyself'; they strive and are successful in achieving their personal and academic goals. Students readily accept the challenges and recognise that in their school, previous difficulties are confined to the past and do not determine their future. As such, they take full advantage of all given situations to increase their spiritual, moral social and cultural development and display a high level of maturity when taking up their responsibilities. The pastoral and academic systems encourage students to use their voice very well in the student forum and participate in local and increasingly, global activities as well as those that are internal to the school as heads of peer, inclusion, years and the school forum. The school is successfully ensuring that students can become leaders of tomorrow. As students progress through the school, they have an increasing understanding of leadership and management skills. Older students and prefects shadow and liaise with staff at all levels when overseeing different year groups so that they can act as representatives, capable of delegating responsibilities and taking decisive actions that will affect the lives of their peers in the school community.

One of the defining features of the school is the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support for the students. Parents and students alike were emphatic in their views that the care is superb. The transition work is widely recognised within the borough as being of the highest quality. The school's proactive approach in preparing students for entry into Year 7 is very successful. Highly effective local partnership work with many of the 50 feeder primary schools supports vulnerable students such as young carers, those with additional needs or those whose circumstances are not supportive of schooling in continuing in education, employment or training when they leave school. Analyses of incoming students' needs and joint teaching with staff in primary schools have contributed to managers dismantling the barriers to learning and providing high quality support so that students with specific challenges can achieve very well. Procedures for safety extend beyond the normal school day. Parents acknowledged that it is not unusual for staff to demonstrate compassion and go beyond the call of duty as students' safety is paramount. Students feel safe and confidently proclaim their use and knowledge of the care systems available to them.

Governors know the school very well; they are committed to sustaining standards and building on the high reputation of the school in the community. They use their experience and expertise effectively and authoritatively to inform short and long term planning; systems of management ensure that leaders at all levels are sufficiently challenged and held to account. Governors are well informed about developments, locally, regionally and nationally. For example, they have ensured that community cohesion is very well promoted with a senior leader having full overview of all aspects of the programme, which is linked to all aspects of equal opportunities. Community cohesion remains a standing item on the school agenda through governors and staff updating

their knowledge and understanding of the local community in relation to age, gender, disability or ethnicity to ensure that the school is well placed to meet the needs of the different groups. Consequently, there is a strong union between the school and the local and wider community. Governors fulfil their statutory duties very well, notably; they ensure that the spirit of the anti-discriminatory legislation is observed fully.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision in the sixth form is outstanding and students are extremely proud of the reputation the school has in the community. They are also proud of the opportunity they have to be part of the wider school family and take their roles as mentors and leaders for younger students very seriously. Academic standards improve year-on-year and are above national averages for individual subjects. The progress students make is outstanding and fully confirms that the school successfully builds on their GCSE results so that their achievement is within the top 15% of schools and colleges nationally.

Students achieve very well because first, the excellent leadership and management of the sixth form maintain a sharp focus on using reviews to bring about improvement. Second, teachers draw on the rich body of data and use internal tracking and value added data rigorously to address variances between individual subjects. This has had a significant impact on standards. Third, students value the regular one-to-one progress reviews with tutors; these are highly focused when monitoring their progress and setting targets for improvement. Fourth, inclusion is a strength and students with complex or additional learning needs receive high quality support which enables them to achieve as well as their peers. Fifth, the strong guidance and support mechanisms mean that students select courses that are well matched to their interests and abilities and they are very well advised when making decisions about their future pathways. Although a traditional curriculum is offered, the school offers applied courses in business, media, art and science and there are plans to roll out new science, creative and media diplomas in the future. In addition to students pursuing academic subjects, there are many opportunities for them to develop wider interests and skills through extensive enrichment activities such as volunteering, taking part in a wealth of cultural and social experiences at home and abroad.

What the school should do to improve further

Self-review is one of the main strengths of this school. Evaluation is robust and because managers use reviews and deliberate changes extensively, there are no significant weaknesses. The school's development plan has accurately identified the 14-19 curriculum and the specialist science status as areas which can be refined further. Targeted actions to improve these areas further are already underway.

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	
The extent to which 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 learners' needs?	1	1
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	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

26 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Southgate School, Barnet, EN4 0BL

The recent inspection of your school on 11 February 2009 was indeed very heart warming. Southgate is an outstanding school and you are rightly proud of the need to guard the high reputation the local community has of your school. At the time of the last inspection in 2006, the school was judged as 'good' but on 11 February, the inspection team confirmed that your school has successfully fulfilled its mission to become one of the best schools nationally. Congratulations! This is no mean feat and calls for celebration.

The school benefits from having outstanding managers and leaders at all levels who are very well supported by all staff. The managers and governors are forward thinking and so, they constantly review the quality of provision to make sure that you can all make rapid progress in your learning. Their ability to stand back and critically appraise your results has helped them to focus quite sharply on improving teaching and learning. As a result, standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are well above the national averages and you all make outstanding progress.

The teachers are well qualified and use their expertise to help you learn very quickly. The student forum was explicit about the support and interactive methods the teachers use to increase your love for learning. It was evident that you and your parents place a high value on acquiring a good education; this fully reflects the school's ambition to provide high quality learning. Because of this, there is excellent partnership work between the home and school. Clearly, everyone benefits from this particularly as expectations are high and you and your parents are consulted often.

You are all successful because the quality of care, guidance and support is exemplary. Your tutors know you well and the cluster arrangement and achievement days are used very well to monitor your work to help you make rapid progress. Your enjoyment of school also extends to the curriculum provision, which is outstanding. The many after school activities give you a well balanced diet of academic and recreational work. Your parents like this; they know you are enjoying school and are not concerned when you prefer to stay at school rather than rush home at the end of the day! The school helps you to enhance your personal development and make very good use of the opportunities to demonstrate a wide range of leadership skills within and beyond the school community. You have a strong sense of responsibility and are assured that your school is equipping you with excellent skills to work in a diverse community and 21st century world. The school forum was clear that your community is enlightened because you are there for each other, therefore, issues around race, gender and disability do not matter. Such perceptive thinking is possible because of the mutual respect and cooperation between you and your teachers.

Yours faithfully

Carmen Rodney

Her Majesty's Inspector