

Silverdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107128
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	324534
Inspection date	30 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1243
Sixth form	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Mordecai
Headteacher	Mrs H Storey
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Bents Crescent Sheffield South Yorkshire S11 9QH
Telephone number	0114 2369991
Fax number	0114 2620627

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the sixth form and investigated the following issues: students' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, the impact of Specialist Language College Status on curriculum provision and on performance in other subjects, and the impact of leadership and management in addressing the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. Evidence was collected from the school's self-evaluation form, nationally published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, observation of the school at work including visits to lessons, and the analysis of parents' questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, the chair of governors, pupils and students in the sixth form. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but inspectors found no evidence that the school's assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school serves an area of mainly owner-occupied housing. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average and there is an increasing number, currently around one-sixth of the school population, who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has an integrated resource unit for 17 students who are profoundly deaf. Silverdale has been a specialist language college since 2005 and gained full International School status in 2008. The school moved into its new building in January of this year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school which has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. Teething troubles apart, staff and students are delighted to be in their new building. Parents agree and comment, Silverdale is a happy and friendly environment and the new building has improved facilities and allows more space for movement.'

Students' levels of attainment on entry to the school vary from year-to-year but are generally above average. Students achieve exceptionally well and reach consistently high standards in GCSE examinations. Performance in English, mathematics and science is particularly impressive and the impact of specialist college status leads to the vast majority of students gaining excellent results in modern foreign languages. Across the GCSE spectrum and also in applied science and business, the percentage of A and A* grades is more than twice the national average. Inspection evidence indicates that students in Year 9 and Year 11 are on course, yet again, to reach their challenging targets. Students new to learning English, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the hearing-impaired resource unit achieve as well as their peers because of the comprehensive support they receive.

Students enjoy their school and their attendance is consistently well above average. Language college status contributes significantly to students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development: students make favourable comments about the multicultural days and about the residential trips to Germany, France, Spain and China. However, students are accurate in their view that behaviour is good rather than outstanding. Moreover, a significant number of parents express concerns about students' conduct. The school recognises that there is a small minority of students whose attitude to learning and to their peers is sometimes not what it should be. Nonetheless, most students display high levels of respect for both other students and adults, have a positive regard for the work of the school council and are not afraid to give visitors advice on what constitutes a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle!

Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and high expectations of what their students can do. They challenge their students realistically to aim for higher standards and comments such as, 'Why not challenge yourselves? Why not reach for the stars?' are the order of the day. Students respond enthusiastically to questions which require depth of thought, and answers in some Year 11 English lessons would not go amiss in a sixth form class. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall and students enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning, because, in their words, 'Our lessons are interesting and our teachers involve us directly in assessing how well we are doing.'

The excellent curriculum is complemented by a wide range of enrichment activities and by the recent introduction of the Managed Learning Environment, which allows students access to learning and support inside and outside formal school hours. Furthermore, the modern languages department supports a variety of languages-related extra-curricular activities, including tuition in Latin and Mandarin Chinese and European work experience for Years 10 and 12. Specialist status has also led to the introduction of vocational options and students benefit from business French, English, Spanish and Italian courses.

Outstanding care, guidance and support are reflected in students' views that staff take a great interest in their welfare and achievements. Without doubt, teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors demonstrate high levels of commitment to activities that promote learners' outstanding personal, social and emotional development as well as ensuring that they achieve

highly in their academic work. Students feel safe and secure and relish the opportunities they have to solve problems and to be challenged to think independently. They say that staff are approachable and go out of their way to help them. The school prides itself on its inclusive nature. Levels of care and support for all groups, including students at risk of underachievement, those who are profoundly deaf, those who speak English as an additional language and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are consistently high. Furthermore, students, including those in the sixth form, support those who are experiencing difficulty most willingly and most effectively. Excellent academic and pastoral monitoring systems make a strong contribution to the achievement and well-being of each and every student. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are in place and fully meet current government guidelines.

At all levels, the quality of leadership and management is excellent. The outstanding headteacher provides a clear vision for how the school should develop and this is shared by all staff. Middle leaders too are adept at monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments and they have a high regard for the committed senior leadership team, which they say, 'Supports us throughout, but holds us to account with rigour.' Leaders have established very strong links with local universities and with a range of schools at home and abroad. Pupils in local primary schools, for example, benefit from the linguistic expertise of both staff and sixth form students. Equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well and leaders work hard to eliminate discrimination. The contribution to community cohesion is good and the school provides language classes for students and their families in Somali, Mandarin Chinese, Urdu and Arabic. Governance is of high quality. Governors support the school very well but are never afraid to challenge the leadership when they feel it is necessary to do so. Outstanding teaching and learning, the significant impact of specialist status and the maintenance of high standards and achievement over time demonstrate that Silverdale has an excellent capacity to improve further and that it provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form, which is consistently oversubscribed. Students speak highly of the teaching they receive and comment, 'Our teachers are so enthusiastic and creative and go out of their way, often giving up their own time, to meet our learning needs.' Indeed, the quality of teaching and learning is first-class and has led to excellent achievement and high standards in A-level examinations over a number of years. As a result, over 95% of students, including some from the profoundly deaf unit, enter higher education and an increasing number of students take up places at Oxford or Cambridge each year. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding and there is wide range of accredited enrichment activities which allow students to train as counsellors, mentor younger students in Silverdale and teach a variety of languages in local primary schools. In addition, Year 12 business studies students have established a website, which gives advice to other students on effective revision and examination techniques.

Sixth formers are grateful for the excellent support and guidance they receive when applying for university places or for employment. As they say, 'We are given the right advice and we are always treated as individuals.' Leadership and management are of the highest order and staff have modified entrance requirements and curriculum content to ensure that more students can benefit from advanced study. This is a 'thinking sixth form', one in which performance and potential are always under review and one of which both staff and students are immensely proud.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students' attitudes to learning and responses to each other around school are of a consistently high standard.

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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	1	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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**

Thank you all so much for the wonderful welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us on Monday lunchtime and also to the two Year 7 students and the Year 11 leader who made such an impressive contribution to the assembly we visited. We would also like to congratulate the basketball teams which became national champions at the weekend before the inspection. I would now like to tell you what we think about your school.

Silverdale is an outstanding school. For a number of years now, GCSE and A-level results have been high and you make excellent progress in your studies, because your teachers teach you exceptionally well. You do particularly well in English, mathematics and science and so many of you reach high standards in modern languages too. Your attendance is outstanding. Most of you behave really well in school but some parents are concerned that a small minority of you do not always conduct yourselves as well as you should. I have asked the school, therefore, to ensure that all of you display mature attitudes to learning and to your classmates.

You speak highly about the wide range of enrichment activities on offer to you and sixth form students enjoy the opportunities they have to support younger students in Silverdale and also to visit primary schools to teach pupils Mandarin Chinese, for example. The support you get from your teachers and from the other adults who work with you is excellent. Those of you in the hearing impaired unit are helped very well by the staff and by other students in class.

Your headteacher and all her staff have worked very hard to make sure that the transition to the new building has been smooth and we know you are delighted with your new surroundings. Your teachers know the school really well and are fully aware of what is needed to make sure that Silverdale goes from strength to strength.

Thanks again for making our visit so enjoyable. It was a pleasure to watch you learn.