

Southend High School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115362
Local Authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	326188
Inspection dates	4–5 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	1019
Sixth form	273
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Richards
Headteacher	Mr Robin Bevan
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2006
School address	Prittlewell Chase Southend-on-sea Essex SS0 0RG
Telephone number	08444 771752
Fax number	01702 300028

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Southend High School for Boys is around average in size and is oversubscribed. The school has a large sixth form to which girls are admitted. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, but comparable with that locally. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low. Entry is selective. The school has been a specialist language college since 2001.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Southend High School for Boys is an outstanding school. It is very well regarded in the local community. The many positive questionnaires from parents demonstrate overwhelming support. The school has maintained its exceptional performance over the years, and has demonstrated an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Achievement is outstanding. Progress is at least good throughout the school. Standards are exceptionally high and well above national averages. In addition, students achieve many qualifications beyond the GCSE or A level framework, for example, in sports leadership or personal finance. As learners, students are accomplished. They ably tackle new subjects and bring maturity to their studies which allows them to question and explore very effectively. This, together with the provision of outstanding extra-curricular activities and an effective house system to encourage participation and excellence, leads to outstanding personal development and well-being.

Teaching and learning are solidly good with a significant number of lessons that are outstanding, particularly in the sixth form. Typically, students and teachers have excellent relationships, and behaviour is very good. Students are keen to contribute to classes and are not slow to ask pertinent questions or make clear when they have not understood something. They are confident and articulate. In a minority of classes however, the most able students are not challenged sufficiently. The school recognises this as an area for development which it is tackling through the spreading of the best teaching practice. The good teaching is complemented by outstanding care, guidance and support so that students feel safe and their individual needs are well catered for. The excellent curriculum enables students to achieve in many different ways and to enjoy their time at school.

Leadership and management have improved since the last inspection and are now outstanding. The school and its governors are not complacent about the need for further improvements. The school has an accurate view of its own strengths and weaknesses. Challenging targets are set so that improvement can be monitored in all aspects of what the school does. Governors fulfil their roles very well.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Achievements and standards are much better than those predicted by GCSE results alone. Almost all students pass all subjects at A level, some taking as many as five or six A levels. The proportion of students who achieve the highest grades, A and B, is exceptionally high both at A and AS level, though with some variability between subjects. The sixth form centre provides very good resources for learning. Retention in the sixth form is very high, and almost all who wish to progress to University do so. Teaching and learning is very effective, with a high proportion of outstanding lessons. The curriculum is good. It offers a broad range of academic subjects which meet the academic aspirations of students well. Good arrangements exist with partners to enable the exchange of students to study courses not offered at the host institution. Participation in enrichment activities has improved since the last inspection and now includes, for example, wide involvement in the Young Enterprise scheme. Compulsory general studies is viewed positively because it is used very well as a vehicle for delivering citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE),

alcohol and drugs awareness, and aspects of study skills. Sixth formers receive excellent support and guidance. They provide very good role models for younger students, whom they often mentor. Academic support is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching in the minority of lessons where the most able students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average. Progress is at least good across the school, and this was confirmed in lesson observations. Students meet and often surpass challenging targets. Standards are exceptionally high at all key stages. When students enter the school in Year 7, their prior attainment is well above average. At Key Stage 3, the school's own data indicate that they make exceptional progress. At Key Stage 4, progress is good. Progress in mathematics, though it has been lower than in other core subjects, improved in 2008. Students attain very high standards which have been consistently maintained over the years. At GCSE, almost all obtain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. The proportion of students who attain the highest grades, A* and A, has been consistently very high and well above the national average. A significant number undertake a large number of GCSEs and attain A* or A grades for all of them. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students because of the outstanding care and support they receive.

In addition to GCSEs, many students achieve extremely well in different qualifications or in other ways. For example, a significant number undertake and pass qualifications in personal finance or sports leader awards. Students are often entered early for GCSEs. A large proportion of students have been entered for the national mathematics challenge, and the majority have received awards. Some have progressed onto national and international events. Students strive to attain high personal achievement, for example, in sports and athletics, where the school has a significant number who have competed successfully at national and international level.

A small number of students do not achieve their full potential, often by attaining A or B grades rather than the A* grades of which they are capable. The school recognises this issue, and is beginning to put in place measures to address it.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have a high priority in the school, and, as a result, have a positive impact on achievement. This means that students have high levels of self-confidence, are articulate and that their preparation for the next phase in education or employment is excellent. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and this is a significant factor in the school's outstanding community cohesion. Apart from a very small number of persistent absentees, attendance is good. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school campus is excellent because there is an ethos of mutual respect amongst all members of the school community. Students speak very highly of the opportunities on offer to them and an exceptionally strong house system enables them all to follow a very broad range of interests. Students enjoy their time at school and participating in competitive events. As a result, they develop a strong sense of belonging and teamwork. Sporting activities

have a high prominence and students know that their involvement has positive benefits for their health and fitness. The school council provides excellent opportunities for students to take on leadership roles and its recommendations are taken into account when the headteacher and governors make decisions. Students feel safe. Sixth form students are encouraged to assist in the day-to-day running of the school, including notable involvement in local community activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are solidly good and are moving towards being outstanding. All lessons observed were at least good. This matches the school's own self-evaluation and mirrors the statistics of the school's monitoring of lessons. Inspectors observed good progress in classes, particularly so in the sixth form.

Students are very effective learners. They are given an excellent grounding in study skills as soon as they arrive in Year 7 and this reaps rewards as they move up through the school. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 11 studying *View from the Bridge*, students made the most of an innovative exercise in using a classmate's revision source to devise their own analysis to emphasise the importance of clarity in preparation. In the best lessons, students' ideas stimulate each other so that they know exactly how they need to improve to reach even higher standards. Relationships between teachers and students are particularly strong. Most teachers have an infectious enthusiasm for their subjects. Students behave impeccably in lessons. They are extremely self-motivated and relish rising to the challenges set for them.

Teachers make very good use of assessment data to ensure that the needs of students are well met. However, in a minority of lessons the most able students are not sufficiently challenged to achieve their best. The school is developing ways in which the most able students can be challenged further. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are very well supported and challenged in class. Teachers monitor learning well and know how each pupil is progressing in each lesson. The professional development of teachers is excellent. Teachers are working well to support each other in introducing an interesting variety of activities into lessons. The extent to which the best practice is identified and shared has improved since the last inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and other activities are outstanding. From entry in Year 7, students are taught key learning skills which underpin their excellent attitudes to learning in all classes. The statutory curriculum is very well enhanced by supplementary courses and opportunities to take extra qualifications, for example in finance, information and communication technology and sports leader awards. Many students take supplementary GCSEs which may be partly or fully taught outside of the school day. Those instigated by the language college often develop into courses available also to the wider public. Such GCSEs include Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and astronomy, which have very high success rates. The provision for PSHE is outstanding. Extra-curricular activities, especially those developed through the house system, are available to all. The opportunities for students to excel and foster their talents in music, drama, sports and science are quite outstanding. Students regularly win prestigious national and regional awards.

Cross-country running, athletics and swimming are particular strengths. A very wide range of educational trips strongly enhance all aspects of the curriculum and when these take students abroad, such as the eclipse trip to Shanghai or music tours in Europe, clear tasks are set to cultivate linguistic and cultural awareness. The contribution made by former students in extending the curriculum is significant, particularly in sports training, business education and in enhancing the excellent programme of visiting speakers. Leadership skills are promoted at all levels and many successful clubs are initiated and run by students. The language college initiatives to train students to support outreach work in primary schools is having a significant impact on the continuity of provision in language learning and complementing the work-experience programme, which students view very positively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care guidance and support are outstanding. The highly effective combination of the school's year group structure and house system enables all students' individual needs to be known by staff. This means that all students are provided with high quality guidance and academic support throughout their time at school. The quality of marking and assessment has improved since the last inspection and students have an accurate picture of their performance and knowledge of improvements they need to make in order to meet challenging targets. Students entering the school in Year 7 or the sixth form have an excellent induction experience. Sixth form girls are particularly positive about the support they receive. Students feel safe and know who to contact in school if they have any concerns and that they will be dealt with promptly. Bullying is rare. The school's reporting system is very effective and students at risk of underachievement are quickly identified and provided with appropriate mentors. Students speak highly of their careers guidance and feel that they can make informed choices about their future, in particular, suitable undergraduate courses. Most gain places at their first choice of university. Robust arrangements for child protection are in place. Those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with excellent support and achieve high levels of success.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because they have consistently had an exceptional impact on the performance of the school and its students. The school is very well regarded locally. This shows in the pride of students and the exceptionally large number of positive responses received in parental questionnaires. The headteacher is relatively new in post and has rapidly and accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. He provides a clear direction for further improvement and is ably supported by colleagues. Morale is high and communications are good. Weaknesses around the consistency of middle managers, identified at the last inspection, have been addressed. Managers are well supported in their roles. The evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate and is used very well to both identify and share the very best practice. The process has confirmed that a few of the highest ability students could achieve better grades, and the school has begun to implement strategies to address this issue.

Self-evaluations are undertaken at all levels in the school. Areas for improvement are accurately identified. Actions are precise and are well monitored. Target setting is well developed, and management information and performance data is both accessible and used well in the process.

The tracking and monitoring of students' progress has improved and is now exemplary. It is used very well to set challenging targets that students and their parents understand. Resources for teaching and learning are good.

Staff are well qualified and experienced. The school complies with requirements for child protection and race relations. Students receive an exceptional education in the awareness of equal opportunities which they demonstrate in their behaviour around the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities usually stay on to the sixth form and achieve as well as their peers.

Governors exercise their responsibilities very well. They are well informed and bring a good range of valuable experience and skill to their role. They are instrumental in helping the school to maintain very high standards and to maintain its excellent contribution to community cohesion detailed previously in this report. The school demonstrates outstanding value for money.

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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	2	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	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 learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
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**

6 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Southend High School for Boys, Southend-on-Sea, SS0 0RG

As you will know, I visited your school earlier this week with three other inspectors. We met many of you, watched your lessons, talked with many of your teachers, and looked at much of your work. Throughout this you were courteous and helpful, and I would like to thank you for that. We were also very pleased to receive so many questionnaires from your parents. The vast majority of these were positive.

You are very fortunate to attend such a good school - we judged it to be outstanding. The vast majority of you will leave with very good GCSEs or A levels which will give you a very good start to your careers or further education. One of the things we were most impressed with was your courtesy, behaviour, and above all, your willingness to learn and question. Your school has many strengths and one of them is you.

You told us many things about your time at the school. You said that you enjoyed your school time and that you feel safe because the staff care for you well. You also told us that you know how well you are doing and that you understand what you need to do to improve - and we agree.

One of the things we found is that in a few of your lessons the teachers do not always challenge you enough. We have asked the school to improve this and they have already made a start by sharing the very best teaching practice amongst teachers so that they learn from each other. This will continue, but you can help by asking if you are unsure, or if you would like to know more.

Lastly, another thing you told us is that bullying is rare. You can help to keep it that way by talking to a teacher if you are affected, or if you see it happening.

Thank you again, and I wish you all well.

Yours faithfully

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's inspector