



Sydenham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number 100741
 LEA Lewisham
 Inspection number 285871
 Inspection dates 22 February 2007
 Reporting inspector Steffi Penny (HMI)

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

Type of School	Comprehensive	School address	Dartmouth Road
School category	Community		London SE26 4RD
Age range of pupils	11-18		
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	020 8699 6731
Number on roll	1526	Fax number	020 8699 7532
Number on roll (6th form)	271		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of Governors	Mr Eamon Martin
		Headteacher	Ms Barbara Williams
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection Date(s)	Inspection No.
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is much larger than average, is over-subscribed and has a mixed sixth form. It has science and mathematics specialist status and has been awarded an Artsmark Gold Award from the Arts Council of England and the Sportsmark Award by Sport England. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is slightly more than the national average. Students have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and a very high proportion speak English as an additional language.

Since 1976 there has been joint provision for 16-19 year olds through the Hillside Consortium with the Forest Hill and Sedgehill schools. Recently there has been an increase in the level of collaboration and the consortium is now the Hillside 14-19 Federation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Students rightly say that Sydenham is an outstanding and fully inclusive school. It provides its students with a safe, caring, friendly and challenging learning environment. One parent reflects the views of the overwhelming majority of parents when she says, 'I feel my daughter has been encouraged to reach her potential, both academically and personally - with strong pastoral support'.

The result of the school's excellent leadership, governance, teaching and care is that students of all abilities make excellent progress, culminating in above average standards. The impact of this leadership at all levels can also be seen in the confident, happy young people that the school develops.

The science and mathematics specialist status has led to the establishment of very successful links with different schools, universities, teacher-training providers and others. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in information and communication technology (ICT).

The school not only does well academically it also offers its students many good opportunities to enhance their personal development and follow healthy lifestyles. The result is that students take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Students work well together and generally behave well. The school successfully teaches them to treat others with respect just as they themselves are treated by the adults, who provide very good role models.

Students are prepared extremely well for their next stage in education and they say that they really enjoy school and know they are there to learn. They are very conscious of taking regard for their own safety and that of others. Their view is supported by the high attendance rate and their generally fantastic attitudes to learning. Although students make a positive contribution to their community, and the school council provides a forum for students to share their thoughts with the adults, there are missed opportunities for all students to play a more significant role in the life of the school and have a great say in what it does.

The school's own self-evaluation secures and promotes consistent and innovative improvements. The school has outstanding capacity to improve even further because of its excellent leadership and governance, committed and hard-working staff, good parental support and the positive attitudes shown by its students.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

All aspects of the sixth form are at least good. Students rightly say that it is fully inclusive. Care, guidance and support along with personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is due to the high quality of the nurturing of students in the main school which results in young people who can increasingly learn independently. Students say they

enjoy being part of the sixth form but that they would like to have more responsibilities and a greater involvement in the whole school community. Inspectors agree that opportunities are missed to encourage students to support the school and all its work wholeheartedly.

Standards and achievement are good because of the knowledgeable and high quality teaching and support that students receive with which they engage fully. The proportion of students that successfully complete courses they have started is much higher than the national average.

Students have an increased access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses through the close collaboration of the school with other schools and colleges. Leaders and managers involved with the sixth form have, through their accurate evaluation, identified that in the recent past some students were allowed to follow courses that were not wholly appropriate for them based on their previous standards. This has changed. From September 2006 the entry requirements for these courses has been raised so that all students in Year 12 are following appropriate courses and progress is improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for students to have a greater say in what goes on in the school.
- Involve the sixth form more in the life of the main school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement in the main school is outstanding. Taking into account the standards that students have when they start school, they make excellent progress by the end of Year 11. Standards on entry to the school are below and well below those found nationally. By the time students leave the main school in Year 11 standards are consistently above or well above the national and local averages. Achievement in English is exemplary. Students make good progress in the sixth form where achievement is good and standards are around the national average.

Through the very careful tracking of progress the school caters well for different groups of students and ensures that all do equally well to reach their potential. The vast majority of students work hard and all are successfully supported to reach the challenging targets that are set by the school. Most parents are aware of the high standard of education provided, one wrote 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school. My daughter has flourished thanks to the high standard of education offered. She has grown in confidence and done so well in all her subjects'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their engagement in various curriculum enrichment activities and the school's ethos result in outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Adults are rightly proud of what the school provides and the way in which students respond. All of this results in students genuinely enjoying being in the school, which they consistently describe in positive terms, repeatedly singling out their outstanding teachers as the main attraction.

Students develop excellent social skills through listening well to each other and willingly sharing their thoughts and ideas. They are sensitive to the needs of others demonstrating empathy, concern and compassion. Staff provide very good role models demonstrating good manners, courtesy and care for others. There are very good relationships between the staff and students which are based on mutual respect such that the behaviour and the attitudes of students are generally good. The school deals efficiently, and fairly with students when their behaviour falls below acceptable standards. The students' multi-cultural knowledge and understanding is clearly demonstrated through the displays around the school.

Students demonstrate through discussion that they understand and know how to follow healthy lifestyles and keep safe. The vast majority take good advantage of the extra-curricular physical activities that the school offers. They are all well prepared for their future lives.

Students are given a number of opportunities to contribute to the school and to the world outside, for example through the school council. More opportunities could be made for them to have a say in what the school does. In particular those of in the sixth form wanted to have more roles and responsibilities so that they could contribute more to the life of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

In the main school teaching and learning are outstanding, meet the needs of all students and result in excellent progress. In the sixth form learning is less secure and this results in progress that is good. Lessons include a good variety of well considered learning activities and students know exactly what is expected of them. Learning aims are effectively shared with students and well-planned starter activities ensure that they are involved quickly. All students are

challenged and know what they have to do to improve the quality of their work as a result of constructive praise and criticism from teachers. A parent commented, 'Teachers provide accurate feedback and they support her learning really well'. Very strong working relationships between teachers and students underpin the quality of learning. This contributes well to their enjoyment of learning. An example of this was an outstanding Year 8 art lesson where expectations were high and the teacher's stimulating and rigorous approach ensured the full range of ability in the class was very well challenged.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum meets the needs of all students and provides a strong framework that enables all to achieve very well, both academically and personally. It offers appropriate breadth and balance and is enhanced by a wide range of extra curricular activities both within the school and beyond. In Years 10 and 11, the school's specialist status has enabled it to develop the curriculum well and plan for further future innovations. A parent commented, 'Teachers at the school have developed or brought to the surface skills I did not know my daughter had. This is particularly true in relation to modern foreign languages and science'.

The school meets the curricular needs of students with learning difficulties and other disabilities well by offering a variety of other certified options alongside the traditional courses. Since the last inspection the range of appropriate ICT courses has widened and resources in this subject have improved. ICT is now used well to support teaching and learning across most subjects.

The post 16 collaboration, as part of the Hillside consortium, now allows for a good range of different types of externally accredited courses to be offered to students in the sixth form. There are also highly effective links with local colleges.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding, caring and supporting environment where students feel safe, develop their personal qualities and make excellent progress towards the challenging targets set for them. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities and other vulnerable students are very well supported. Their progress towards targets set in their individual education and personal education plans is regularly monitored and evaluated. Provision for ensuring health and safety is very strong. Child protection and risk assessment procedure are securely in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities. When appropriate, support is enhanced further by the effective involvement of outside professional agencies.

The monitoring and evaluation of assessment data to set academic targets is very well established, as is testing on entry to the school in Year 7. Regular reviews take place in which students and teachers are fully involved. Assessment of students with learning difficulties and other disabilities is also robust and those with a statement of special educational need are provided with good quality individual education plans as they progress through the school. There are very effective procedures in place to support those students with English as an additional language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding in the main school. They contribute significantly to the above average standards and consistently outstanding achievement. The school is extremely successful in identifying and tackling any barriers to learning through self-evaluation which involves all staff. The school's systems for self-evaluation are rigorous and robust and give an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for development.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership and enjoys highly effective support from the senior leadership team. Governors and staff work exceptionally well in supporting the school's ethos and pursuing future projects. There is a shared understanding of priorities and commitment for improvement. This is achieved through continued professional development of staff, strategies to share good practice and the way in which key areas for development are prioritised and debated throughout the school. Considerable changes have been implemented in terms of staff responsibilities to ensure greater consistencies and better outcomes for students.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good due to the lack of complacency of staff and the effective support of the school's senior leadership team. The recent appointment of a leader for the Federation for post 14 provision has made great strides in improving the administration and impact of the schools' work in this area.

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