

Southfield School for Girls

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 122113 |
| Local Authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 359171 |
| Inspection dates | 10–11 November 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Clive Kempton HMI |

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

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Girls |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1035 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Phyllis Lockwood |
| Headteacher | Sue Dunford |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 February 2008 |
| School address | Lewis Road Kettering NN15 6HE |
| Telephone number | 01536 513063 |
| Fax number | 01536 518487 |
| Email address | enquiries@southfield.northants.sch.uk |

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Royal Exchange Buildings
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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 17 lessons and 17 teachers. They held meetings with the senior and middle managers of the school, the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, a group of seven parents and carers, nine outside professionals associated with the school, and met a representative from the local authority. They spoke to nine groups of students in all year groups. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, as well as subject development plans and the specialist school development plans. Evidence was also provided from the 212 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those from staff and students who completed questionnaires to express their views of the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Is attainment in mathematics in line with that in other subjects?
- Do lower ability students underachieve?
- Is assessment consistent - an issue from the last report?
- How sharp is development planning at all levels?
- What accounts for improved outcomes in the sixth form since the last inspection?

Information about the school

The school is of average size for its type. It draws its students from 48 primary schools from across Kettering and the surrounding rural area and the nearby towns of Wellingborough and Corby. The majority of girls are from White British backgrounds, although a small proportion comes from other ethnic backgrounds. A few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is below the national average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is oversubscribed and enjoys a relatively stable staff and student population. It holds a number of prestigious awards including: sports and science specialist status; High Performing Specialist School status; Gifted and Talented Lead School; Artsmark Silver; Sportsmark; and National Healthy Schools award. A growing number of students, both boys and girls join Southfield from other schools for their sixth form education.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Southfield is a good and improving school. It has a good sixth form. Throughout the school, students thrive and develop into self-assured, articulate young adults, prepared with the confidence and personal skills to take their place in society. A parent of a new Year 7 student reflected the views of many when commenting, 'I know my daughter will flourish here.'

The school has the following outstanding features:

- the exemplary behaviour of the students both within lessons and around the school
- the way they adopt a healthy, active lifestyle
- the contribution they make to the school and local community
- the way the school works with outside professionals to improve provision and outcomes.

Students enter the school with attainment similar to the national average. They make good progress as they move through the school, so that by the time they reach Year 11, their attainment is above the national average in many subjects, especially dance, physical education, and some of the specialist subjects. This good progress continues into the sixth form, where examination results are also above the national average. More-able students make especially good progress due to the extended range of opportunities provided by the Gifted and Talented Lead School initiative, where they have the opportunity for early examination entry in some subjects. The sports specialist status is beginning to impact across the curriculum. For example, in English, with students writing biographies of famous sports personalities and in science with the measurement of forces in trampolining. While staffing difficulties have hindered quicker progress in some subjects, these are now resolved and the school is poised to make accelerated progress towards its aim of becoming an outstanding school. A new electronic system to track students' progress is now in place and assessment is much more focused on identifying underachieving students so that timely intervention can put them back on track.

Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and have acted on areas of identified weakness, for example, attendance, which is now above average and still improving. For these reasons, leaders and managers have a good capacity to sustain the school's improvement further and act on the issues raised by this inspection. However, school improvement planning is not sufficiently focused on the few key priorities shared by all staff, to raise attainment and improve the quality of teaching and learning. The success criteria are too general and do not allow senior staff, parents and carers and the governing body to measure the impact of agreed actions.

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Lesson observations shared with the senior staff confirmed that they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning. In the best lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and plan a challenging range of activities that empower learners to make good progress. In the less successful lessons, teachers talk too much and there is a more limited range of activities. Consequently, students are too passive and not provided with sufficient opportunity to work independently or creatively and their work is not sufficiently celebrated through display.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 90% is judged to be good or better by:
 - ensuring that lesson activities contain more exciting, creative tasks that provide opportunities for students to learn independently
 - celebrating students' achievement through high quality display in classrooms, corridors and public areas.
- Ensure that whole-school improvement planning is more sharply focused on a few key priorities, with measurable success criteria known to all staff, that will further raise attainment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The proportion of students gaining five or more A* - C GCSE grades or equivalent has risen since the last inspection and was above average in 2009 and 2010. The number achieving this with English and mathematics included was also above average, but not significantly so. Attainment in English was above average in 2009 but fell in 2010. Attainment in mathematics has improved and is now above the national average. The performance of lower ability students is also improving because their progress against targets is well monitored and appropriate intervention strategies are in place. Students' current learning and performance observed in classrooms mirror the continuing improvement reflected in the most recent examination results, including in the school's specialist subjects of sport, science and mathematics. The outcomes of vocational courses are generally good and improving.

In the large majority of lessons, students from all social and ethnic backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, as do those who speak English as an additional language. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what students are expected to learn and where the work closely matches their needs. Inspection evidence demonstrates that the vast majority of lessons engage students, who perform best when they are actively involved in their learning. In a good vocational lesson on nutritional requirements as part of the physical education course, tasks were engaging and students made good use of information and communication technology to research the nutritional needs of athletes.

Students feel safe in school. Their behaviour in and around school is exemplary and noted by visitors. Students are considerate towards each other and there are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Any reported incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with. Students adopt excellent, healthy lifestyles, through the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available, such as cheerleading and the on-site football academy. The

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excellent range of food provided at the school canteen has a high take-up and is appreciated by students, as well as by parents and carers. The students' excellent contribution to the community is shown in their hosting and entertaining of senior citizens at regular tea dances, and supporting adults with learning difficulties who attend the school weekly to develop the kitchen garden. All students in Year 9 complete a leadership course in literacy, numeracy, languages and sport. All these experiences have a positive impact on students' personal development.

A significant development since the last inspection has been the improvement in attendance. The school has worked hard to raise the profile of attendance and reduce persistent absence. Numerical evidence indicates that school attendance is now above average and close to being high. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is excellent. Cultural development is slightly weaker as there are too few opportunities across the curriculum for students to develop a wider understanding of different cultures.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 2 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 1 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. Strengths include teachers' secure subject knowledge, very good working relationships with students, brisk pace of lessons and very effective behaviour management.

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Teachers provide regular opportunities for students to work in pairs and small groups. As a result, students learn more quickly and acquire valuable workplace skills, such as the ability to work collaboratively and learn to value each other's contribution. Almost every student who expressed a view in the inspection questionnaire thinks that teachers help them to make good progress during lessons. Most teachers clearly explain the learning objectives and regularly check students' understanding of work completed. However, teachers are sometimes too quick to provide explanations and do not provide enough time for students to work things out for themselves. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. Students know their targets and work keenly to achieve them.

The curriculum is adapted well to meet students' interests, needs and aspirations and this is reflected in their good achievement. For example, a wide range of visitors come into school to support subjects such as science, dance and personal and social education. Inmates from Wellingborough Prison come in to talk to students about their experiences, and Year 7 students participate in the 'fit to learn' course which helps them to develop independent thinking and learning skills. The school also works in close partnership with other providers and this has facilitated the introduction of an extensive range of courses, including three diplomas, several Young Apprenticeships and a wide range of opportunities for pupils with particular gifts and talents. The school's specialist status is making a good contribution to students' achievement and this is reflected particularly in the specialist subjects.

This school has effective pastoral systems and students feel safe and well looked after within a calm yet vibrant atmosphere. Parents and carers are confident in the level of care provided, saying that adults know the children very well and are sensitive to their individual needs. One parent commented, 'They treat my daughter as their own. They genuinely care.' Close links with community agencies ensure that specialist help, such as bereavement counselling or anger management courses, is provided for students as and when the need arises. Induction to the school is well supported and ensures a smooth transition into Year 7 and between key stages.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is well led by a determined headteacher and experienced senior staff, who are well respected by the school community. Despite staffing difficulties and staff absence and illness, standards have been maintained and improvement consolidated. Senior leaders collectively share the ambition to become an outstanding school and have demonstrated that they can tackle areas of identified weakness, such as improving the tracking of

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students' progress, and ensuring that underachieving students are identified and supported. Middle managers now use this data well to monitor and evaluate the progress of students in their subject and write appropriate development plans to improve outcomes. To this end, promoting equality and tackling discrimination are key features of the work of all leaders, managers and other adults in the school. All students, regardless of academic ability or physical disability, are provided with appropriate support and achieve well.

Safeguarding procedures are effective. The school meets the requirements to keep students safe and, consequently, they feel very safe. The single central record of staff is completed meticulously. The governing body and staff, including the teacher responsible for child protection, have received recently updated training. The school's safeguarding policies are complete, and most have been very recently reviewed. A careful note is kept of accidents and of the rare racist incidents. Procedures to deal with any issues in which students might be deemed at risk are robust.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are regular visitors in school and hold the school to account. They have received training, much from the headteacher, to be efficient and effective in their roles. They ensure that community cohesion is promoted well within the school, although they have not yet effected a link with another school in a different context in this country. Links do exist with a girls' school and orphanage in India.

External partners connected with the school are very positive about their links and enjoy coming to work with Southfield students. They all appreciate the warmth of the welcome and the commitment of the staff and students to engage in projects. They all remark on students' excellent behaviour and what excellent ambassadors they are for the school. One commented, 'The school has the facility, expertise and the will to work with the community.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

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Sixth form

Achievement is consistently good. Students across the ability range make good progress. The sixth form curriculum is well matched to students' needs. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and offer effective role models. Students' skills develop well as a result. They have a positive approach to learning and work cooperatively. In the better lessons, tasks are student focused, giving them confidence in leading activities. Learning is sensitively personalised to ensure that all students are making good progress, successfully reflecting the outstanding level of care, guidance and support available to them. The high level of care fosters positive relationships with their peers and with their teachers and accounts, largely, for improved outcomes since the last inspection.

Many Year 11 students choose to stay on in the sixth form, commenting enthusiastically on the friendly atmosphere in the common room. The football academy and the music course, in particular, have led to a small, but steady influx of boys joining the sixth form. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding, reflected in their wide contribution to the life of the school. For example, they act as buddies and academic mentors to younger students and support the school in an interesting variety of clubs. These include the eco club, fund-raising and charitable activities. Students are encouraged to develop appropriate skills for their future lives through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Young Enterprise programmes. Preparation for the next step in their careers is well supported, especially the carefully prepared guidance they are given in preparing their applications to university.

Day-to-day leadership and management of the sixth form by a committed and caring team are good. There are robust systems in place to evaluate students' progress and ensure successful guidance and assessment. However, these have yet to impact systematically on outcomes. Similarly, strategies are in place to develop a consistent approach to creative, student-based learning in the classroom, but these have yet to become fully coherent across all faculties.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

Overall, parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Most report that their child enjoys school; that their child is safe in school; and that the teaching is good. Inspectors found this to be an accurate view. The largest negative response was to the statement, 'The school informs me about my child's progress.' Inspectors pursued this concern with the school and with a group of parents and carers during the inspection. They receive information about their

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child's progress in the form of regular updates and one full report annually. In the meeting held with parents and carers, those present felt that the school had an open-door policy and anyone could make an appointment to clarify the progress their child was making. The headteacher has agreed to write to parents and carers and reiterate how and when they are informed about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southfield School for Girls to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 212 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1035 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 97 | 46 | 102 | 48 | 11 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 98 | 46 | 105 | 50 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 58 | 27 | 115 | 54 | 26 | 12 | 4 | 2 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 87 | 41 | 107 | 50 | 10 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 80 | 38 | 123 | 58 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 64 | 30 | 117 | 55 | 21 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 72 | 34 | 125 | 59 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 79 | 37 | 115 | 54 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 75 | 35 | 116 | 55 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 70 | 33 | 116 | 55 | 11 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 44 | 21 | 126 | 59 | 17 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 77 | 36 | 114 | 54 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 99 | 47 | 96 | 45 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

| Grade | Judgement | Description |
|---------|--------------|--|
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. |

Overall effectiveness of schools

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school. |
| Learning: | how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners. |
| Overall effectiveness: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started. |

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Southfield School for Girls, Kettering, NN15 6HE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the other inspectors when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do to make further improvements.

You go to a good and improving school. Your behaviour in and around the school is excellent and this, coupled with the strong relationships you make with your teachers, allows you to make good progress and attain examination results above the national average. You have lots of opportunities to make a contribution to the school and local community, for example, the range of leadership roles you can take on as sixth form mentors, Year 9 leaders, or working with local senior citizens and students with special needs from other schools. These skills will be very useful to you in later life and help to develop your confidence and self-esteem. Your teachers and other adults work hard to help you learn, and those of you who need extra help get good support from adults in school or professionals from outside school.

The sports specialism has raised the profile of sport not just in school, but in the community. A lot of you choose to attend additional activities after school and those who do benefit greatly from the habit of regular activity to extend into your adult life.

In order to make your school even better, I have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following things:

- make sure that activities in lessons are more exciting and allow you more opportunities to learn independently
- celebrate your achievements more by displaying high-quality work in classrooms and around the school
- ensure that the plans the school writes to improve your examination results have clear and measurable success criteria.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

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