

Sunnydown School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	125458
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	381076
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Brent
Headteacher	T Moore Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	February 2009
School address	Portley House 152 Whyteleafe Road Caterham CR3 5ED
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Residential provision	Sunnydown School
Social care unique reference number	SC013896
Social care inspector	Angus Mackay

Age group	11–16
Inspection date(s)	2–3 May 2012
Inspection number	381076



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Introduction

Inspection team

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Blow

Additional inspector

Angus Mackay

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 10 teachers teaching 12 lessons; five of these were joint observations with members of the school's senior team. In addition, inspectors joined other activities, before and after school and at lunchtimes, and heard a small group of students read in class. Discussions were held with students, members of the governing body, including a parent governor, and with school staff, including senior and middle managers. Inspectors looked at the school's work and considered a number of documents, including the school development plan, arrangements for safeguarding and promoting equality, and details of the curriculum. They also analysed 44 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Sunnydown is an average-sized special school for boys with a range of learning difficulties, including dyslexia (SpLD), speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and autistic spectrum condition (ASC). All students attending the school have a statement of special educational needs and many are vulnerable students for whom a mainstream setting previously proved unsuccessful. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average, as are the proportions of students from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English. The school has weekly residential provision for up to 34 students and, at the time of the inspection, there was a mixture of students staying weekly and part-weekly. The school is a member of the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Students and holds a number of awards, including Partnership with Parents and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

New facilities for the teaching of food technology have been added to the school since the previous inspection. There are also plans in place for a further capital works programme to begin in the near future, providing new classrooms and enhanced residential provision. Since the last inspection, there have been some staff changes, including the appointment of a deputy headteacher, who joined the school in September 2011.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- This is an outstanding school. As a result of very high quality teaching and care, students make outstanding progress in their learning as well as in their behaviour and social skills, and achieve very well. The school’s focus on improving skills in English, reading and communication is very effective. Students achieve particularly well in mathematics. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to involve the students in assessing for themselves how well they are doing.
- Students respond extremely well to the safe and orderly atmosphere of the school. They are considerate and respectful to one another in lessons, during the more informal parts of the school day and after school. They learn to manage their behaviour very well, and enjoy school and the very good relationships that exist.
- The curriculum is very well matched to the needs and aspirations of the students, and there are very good plans in place to extend this further. Full use is made of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to promote all aspects of the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the students, and to ensure their safety. Pending the start of a planned building programme, there has been a slight lapse in the formalising of arrangements for emergency evacuation of some of the temporary buildings.
- The headteacher and head of care know the school’s strengths and weaknesses extremely well. They have made full use of performance management and supervision processes to review and maintain the high quality of teaching and care. Staff morale is very high and this enhances the extremely positive atmosphere in the school. Procedures for school self-review and continuing improvements are, however, not always consistent across all school and care.
- The residential provision contributes very strongly to the students’ achievement, their behaviour and their feelings of safety. Accommodation for the senior students is of a slightly lower quality than that of the juniors.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Streamline the processes for self-evaluation and improvement across the care and education departments of the school.
- Ensure that teachers consistently support students in their own evaluation of how much they have learnt in each lesson, as well as over time.
- Take action to ensure that the high quality decoration and furnishings found in the younger residents' accommodation is replicated in the older students' boarding house.
- Ensure that risk assessment for fire procedures includes the temporary classrooms, pending the completion of replacement building work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

One student succinctly described his school, saying, 'School is for fun and for learning.' Students make outstanding progress overall, many starting in Year 7 with attainment at the low levels of the National Curriculum. They finish in Year 11 with a number of GCSEs reaching and sometimes exceeding national standards. As they move through the school, students' achievement is supported very well by an appropriate focus on the key areas of literacy, numeracy and communication. Attainment is particularly strong in mathematics, art and science. Attainment in subjects which are more directly linked to the students' communication and literacy needs, such as English and humanities, is generally lower. However, these needs are addressed very well so that the gap between these and other subjects narrows during students' time at the school.

Progress against targets identified on the students' individual education plans is tracked in careful detail by the special educational needs coordinator. The school has also introduced a new system of reviewing academic progress to which all staff contribute on a very regular basis. As a result of this, initiatives to accelerate the progress for any students seen to be falling behind show very good impact. For example, those students with literacy difficulties who have been identified as making less progress than others make noticeable progress as a result of group-based and individual intervention. Care staff contribute very well to this progress by providing regular opportunities for reading after school. Overall, the school's analysis shows that students with identified ASC make less progress than those with SpLD, but this varies between individuals and types of additional need. Almost all parents or carers who responded to the questionnaire were happy about the progress their children were making. 'He is encouraged at every turn to reach his potential' and 'It offers my son life skills as well as an education' were typical of the many comments made.

In lessons, students make outstanding progress overall. They respond well to

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opportunities to work on their own and, as they mature, to work collaboratively. The best learning takes place in lessons where teachers use a range of resources or approaches to build up students' knowledge and consolidate learning. For example, students who were preparing for their physical education examination made full use of their communication, numeracy and physical skills by working in groups, competing in teams and evaluating their success. Other, younger students were able to tackle quite sophisticated ideas and vocabulary in a very well-prepared lesson which considered a poem about water after a drought.

Quality of teaching

Students know that they benefit from their time at the school and the very good relationships that they have with the teaching and support staff. They demonstrate increasing resilience, confidence and independence as they progress through the school and this helps to reduce their anxieties when tackling their work. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the very high quality teaching that their children receive. Teaching consistently adds to students' knowledge and understanding, and allows them to develop a range of skills, including communication, reading, writing and mathematics, across the curriculum. Clarity about the different subjects which form the whole curriculum helps students to understand what is expected of them so that they are motivated to try their best. Teachers use their subject knowledge and specialist skills very effectively to plan and set challenging tasks. They know their students very well and this helps them to match activities to the needs and interests of the class. Students who are ready to work independently or in small groups make notable progress when they are encouraged to do so for all or part of a lesson. For example, two groups of older students worked very well together to tackle a mathematics problem which needed to be broken down into small steps. Their learning was increased when a representative from each group presented their findings and working. One student accurately summed this up, saying, 'That group got the first part right, we got the second – together we've got it all right!'

Students develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Opportunities to reflect on their own and others' achievements enhance their spiritual, moral and social development. Extra-curricular trips and events capture their interest and enhance their cultural awareness extremely well. Teachers assess students' progress regularly and students are guided very well to make exceptional progress in many subjects. Teachers appropriately adjust the amount and type of guidance given according to the understanding and anxiety levels of the students. However, this sometimes leads to teachers making their own judgements about how much students have learnt in a lesson rather than encouraging them to make this assessment for themselves. As a result, teachers do not always obtain as much information as they could about each student's learning in every lesson.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school rightly prides itself on building self-esteem and creating strong

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relationships between the staff and the students. As a result, as described by the headteacher, 'Students are able to develop their social and communication skills and work towards achieving mutual respect.' There are marked improvements in behaviour over time for individuals with particular needs and, as a result, an extremely harmonious atmosphere exists both in and out of lessons. Parents and carers agree that there is a high standard of behaviour in the school. Although a small number of students feel that their own behaviour could be further improved, the large majority also feel that behaviour is good in school. Students are very tolerant of one another in their classes and in their residence. Younger and older students mix very well together and are very supportive of each other.

Very good contact is made with external agencies, as well as parents and carers, to provide support for students both in and out of school. Students have an evident trust in the adults working with them so that they feel very safe. Those students who have particular social or emotional needs are supported extremely well. For example, one boy described how he joined the school this year following a very disturbed period in his life. He was full of praise for the school, describing how he no longer felt anxious about his safety and, as a result, his own behaviour was safer. Students, in school and in the residence, have a very good awareness of the different forms of bullying. Instances of bullying, including any racist or gender-based comments, are rare and are taken very seriously in all areas of the school.

Leadership and management

The school's commitment to raising achievement, tackling discrimination and promoting equality for all the students is evident in all aspects of its work. Increasingly detailed analysis of the progress made by groups and individuals means that the school's evaluation of the outstanding progress made by students is secure. Changes to the senior management team have introduced some new systems and processes for whole-school self-evaluation and improvement. Some of these new systems have yet to be fully consolidated, although they have further improved the level of information which is now available to all staff. Well-focused professional development strengthens the quality of teaching and support, and staff speak highly of the 'open door' ethos which exists.

Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and the residential provision makes a very significant contribution to the students' progress and well-being. While the current curriculum meets the needs of the students very well, further well-planned changes are now being put into place, ensuring that an even broader range of experiences will be available in future. The impact of the new food technology block is already evident, with lessons and evening activities promoting the skills of students very well. For example, preparations for a 'Come Dine with Me' evening with a partner girls' school were being made during the inspection. Events such as these enhance the school curriculum and promote students' social, moral and spiritual and cultural development very well. The school works very effectively with local services and a range of other external partners to provide students with a rich mix of in-school and out-of school opportunities. Older students in particular benefit from strong links with

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local colleges, so that retention in college placements is high. Partnerships with parents and carers are a strength of the school: 'We are listened to and supported,' wrote one.

Staff and members of the governing body are committed to and rightly proud of the school, and share the headteacher's determination for its continuing development. As it moves into the next phase of its development, the school has strong capacity for continuing improvement.

Residential provision

The residential provision makes a significant contribution to students' development and achievement. Residential students have a very wide range of leisure pursuits which engage and educate them extremely well. Staff provide opportunities for them to explore the wider community safely, form friendships and develop social skills through carefully planned activities. There is a strong focus on healthy living, which the students enthusiastically embrace. Healthy eating is promoted exceptionally well and students' personal and health needs are all met.

Residential students talk animatedly about their care plans and their contribution to them. Staff use the plans to provide an excellent link between the school and the residential provision. Parents and carers say that the induction process is excellent and engages them in ensuring that all of their children's care, cultural and educational needs are met. Parents, carers and students praise the excellent care provided, saying that the school has 'a real family feel'.

The school makes outstanding provision to safeguard residential students. Staff recruitment is robust and greatly enhanced by the meaningful engagement of the students in the interview process for new staff. The regular renewal of Criminal Records Bureau checks is an additional enhancement to the safe care of the residential students. Staff are skilled at raising the awareness of students to all forms of discrimination and bullying, and teaching them how to stay safe.

The school provides a bright, comfortable and safe environment. The accommodation for the junior students is particularly attractive, although that for older students is slightly less welcoming. Outstanding health and safety monitoring covers all the required areas. Risk assessments are well maintained and ensure that students can experience challenging and exciting activities in a safe manner. During the inspection, it was noted that arrangements for the portable buildings in the event of a fire alarm, although understood by all, were not included in the risk assessment documents for the school.

The management and organisation of the residential provision are outstanding. The

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managers and staff place the welfare, engagement and protection of residents at the centre of their practice. The students are empowered through this positive approach, enabling them to take full advantage of the school programme. There is room for improvement in the ways in which self-evaluation procedures are aligned between the care and education departments of the school. However, the dynamic leadership of the care department ensures regular monitoring of all policies and procedures to ensure they are helpful to staff practice and aid the students’ development.

National minimum standards

- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

These are the grades for the residential provision

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	1
Quality of residential provision and care	1
Residential pupils’ safety	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	1

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

4 May 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Sunnydown School, Caterham CR3 5ED

Thank you for helping us to learn about your school. We really enjoyed our visit. It was good to meet so many of you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

Sunnydown School is an outstanding school which helps you to make excellent progress in your learning. You told us how much you enjoy school; you are safe and very well supported, and this helps you to grow into mature young people. There are many interesting things for you to do in and out of school, and those of you who are boarders clearly benefit from the times when you stay in school.

Although some of you think your own behaviour could be better, many of you told us that you think behaviour is very good in school. We agree with that and think that those of you who have worked hard to improve your work, your communication skills and your behaviour have a right to feel very proud.

Teachers work hard to plan lessons that will help you to make as much progress as you can in many different ways. We have asked them to check with you very regularly how much progress you think you have made in lessons. You can help your teachers by working with them to decide how much you have learnt so that they can know if there is anything that is worrying you that they need to go over again.

You will be excited to learn that some new buildings are being planned. Until this happens, we have asked your headteacher to make sure that fire alarm procedures for the portable buildings are written down and clear. We have also asked your head of care and the headteacher to improve the home for the senior boys as soon as possible, although this may be after the new building has been finished.

The headteacher and all the staff want to make Sunnydown School as good as it can be. Some new systems have been introduced to help them to do this and we have suggested that they should be used across all departments of the school. That way, you can all know how well you, and the staff, are doing. I am sure that you will all continue to try your best so that your school can be even better in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy
Her Majesty's Inspector

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