



Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118884
LEA Kent
Inspection number 280422
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Bob Drew RISP

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Langton Lane
School category	Foundation		Nackington Road
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Canterbury, Kent CT4 7AS
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01227 463567
Number on roll	884	Fax number	01227 456486
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Rosi McElroy
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2000	Headteacher	Dr Matthew Baxter

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 280422
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Simon Langton Grammar School is an 11 to 18 selective school for boys. Girls are admitted to the sixth form, which contains over a third of the school's population. Pupils come from Canterbury and a wide surrounding area. Attainment on entry is well above average and, with a few exceptions, pupils come from an advantaged background. The school has specialist college status in science and mathematics and there is provision for a small number of pupils on the autistic spectrum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The standard of education in the school is good, and it provides good value for money. Most pupils achieve exceptionally high standards and make exceptionally fast progress in their first three years. In the sixth form, good examination results enable virtually all GCE advanced level (A level) candidates to gain entry to university. Progress in Key Stage 4 is more mixed and, although the picture is improving, a small minority still does not achieve five A* to C grades at GCSE, causing the school to fall short of its target. This is partly due to pupils' weaker performance in a few subjects where the teaching is not demanding enough. The school's specialist status is helping it build upon its considerable strengths in science and mathematics to improve the quality of teaching across the school.

The curriculum is excellent in both the main school and the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities give all pupils exceptional scope for enriching their experience, particularly in the many ways in which they can serve the local and wider community. The school is also very good at listening to pupils and involving them in decision making, which has led to the outstanding quality of their personal development. The school has a very high standard of care for its pupils in most respects, but the new assessment and tracking systems designed to improve the monitoring of pupils' progress have not yet bedded down.

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and has driven many improvements, which collectively make this a much more effective school than at the last inspection. Middle management is satisfactory, with some subjects very well run, but a few others are not as well led and standards and teaching in them are not as strong. On balance, the school has a very good capacity to maintain and improve its performance, not least because it has an accurate understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to get better.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good. Sixth form students achieve well academically and their personal development is excellent. They appreciate and enjoy the stimulating teaching, which challenges and stretches them. They benefit from a very rich range of opportunities to become involved in the development of the school. Their views are highly regarded by staff and they have become valued partners in decision making at all levels. Sixth form students have extensive involvement outside school through the school's wide-ranging partnerships with external organisations. Effective self-evaluation is leading to improved provision in areas such as careers advice and guidance, which has been inadequate in the past. Strong management of the sixth form ensures that performance is monitored increasingly well.

What the school should do to improve further

• Raise pupils' standards in the weaker GCSE subjects by making teaching more challenging and subject management more rigorous. • Implement fully the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their very high standards on entry, pupils make exceptionally good progress to Year 9. Until recently, progress at Key Stage 4 was no more than satisfactory but improvements have been made and it is now good. However, significant differences still exist between the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades in different subjects. Results in French and Spanish are amongst the best nationally but pupils' progress in economics, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and technology is less impressive. Improvements to the curriculum, interim assessments and changes in staffing are having a positive effect. Targets are now better understood and suitably challenging, and are contributing more strongly to pupils' progress.

The vast majority of pupils proceed into the sixth form, which has high entry requirements. Once there, they make good progress. Those who join Year 12 from other schools, including girls, succeed equally well. Results at GCE A level are outstanding. For example, the standards achieved by students in art, design and technology, German, further mathematics and physics are among the very best in the country.

The few pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The small numbers who speak English as an additional language learn well and make similar progress to the other pupils. The many very able pupils in the school are identified properly and progress well through the various inspiring challenges provided.

The very high standards reached throughout the school in science and mathematics confirm that the specialist status contributes significantly to pupils' overall academic success.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. They enjoy coming to school, as shown by high levels of attendance and good punctuality. Pupils are very well motivated and self-disciplined, and require only minimal intervention to keep them working hard.

Pupils act sensibly and safely and this, together with their good behaviour, results in a very calm and orderly environment where pupils feel secure and able to learn. The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding. For example, they have been instrumental and highly successful in ensuring that a very good range of healthy

food and drink is now on offer, and large numbers engage in regular physical activities in their own time, achieving many commendations in sport.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As a result, they make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. Of particular note is the highly effective way in which they carry out their voluntary responsibilities and support charities. In addition, pupils are gaining useful skills that will contribute significantly to their future economic well-being. They are learning to be extremely articulate, self-assured and socially skilled young people with high aspirations and very high levels of independence. At the same time, they are very accepting and tolerant of those with different opinions from their own.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is outstanding at Key Stage 3, which explains the very rapid progress that pupils make in English, mathematics and science. It is good overall at Key Stage 4, but there are pockets of less effective teaching. Most lessons are well structured, lively and stimulating. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in attitudes to learning, particularly at Key Stage 4. The slower progress made by pupils in some subjects at Key Stage 4 is explained by weaker planning, slower pace and the low expectations of teachers. Teaching and learning are strong in the sixth form. Teachers are experts in their subjects and students are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and very able pupils are very well challenged.

Most teachers are committed to improving the quality of their teaching and the school effectively evaluates teaching in order to share good practice through the professional development of staff. The school has rightly identified assessment for learning, and opportunities for pupils' independent learning, as areas for development. There are already examples of good practice in some subjects, for instance in English, science and geography, but not in all.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school has made very good improvement to the curriculum since the previous inspection, so that provision is now excellent. Specific inadequacies previously identified, such as in religious education and ICT, have been rectified through the introduction of GCSE short courses.

A wide range of subjects and courses is offered in response to pupils' needs. In the sixth form, every pupil is able to follow his or her first choice of subjects. At Key Stage 4, the school has been flexible in offering courses to meet different needs, for example by varying the options in science. Lessons have also been lengthened and this has been effective in promoting extended writing.

The school's specialist status brings benefits beyond science and mathematics. The good links with primary schools enjoyed by these subjects have stimulated and guided improved partnership across a range of subjects, for instance in music and physical education. Opportunities for enrichment, both within lessons and beyond, are outstanding and contribute significantly to pupils' personal development and positive attitudes to learning. The extremely high take-up for instrumental lessons, the range and quality of sports activities, the commitment to environmental work and the support for two schools in Africa are outstanding features.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support given to pupils are good and contribute significantly to the excellence of their personal development. Pupils and parents speak very highly of what the school does in this area.

Pupils have ready access to personal help and advice, not only from adults, but from fellow pupils specifically trained in this role. The 'pupil voice' is now given a very high profile and pupils know that their opinion is sought, acted upon, and much valued. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress are more effective in some subjects than in others, but newly appointed academic mentors are beginning to remedy this inconsistency. The quality of advice and guidance given about courses at Key Stage 4 and in further and higher education is good and improving.

There are good arrangements for safeguarding pupils in lessons and around the school and, through a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education, pupils are taught how to lead a safe and healthy life. Child protection arrangements are effective. Staff are conscientious in ensuring that pupils are as safe as possible on school trips.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding and has provided a strong sense of direction for the school. This has led to substantial improvement since the previous inspection. With strong support from senior colleagues, he has significantly enhanced the quality of pupils' personal development. At the same time, changes to the curriculum and the school's behaviour policy, are helping to ensure that pupils make good overall progress and achieve well in the sixth form.

The quality of leadership and management varies significantly between subjects. While teaching and assessment are not monitored adequately in some subjects, in others, middle managers, such as those leading geography and mathematics and those working as academic monitors, have contributed very effectively to the improvements achieved since the last inspection. The governing body provides good strategic guidance to the school, offers very strong support and effectively holds senior managers to account.

Self-evaluation by the school is good. The broad judgements it makes about its own work are well founded and have led to effective change. Relative weaknesses, for instance, in monitoring learning, have been accurately identified, and action is taking place to bring about improvements. Monitoring by senior and middle managers has become more rigorous than it was and has enabled many improvements to take place, although there is still some inconsistency in the quality of lesson observations.

The school matches its commitment to equality of opportunity with effective practice. This is reflected in the specific provision made for pupils with Aspergers and those on the autistic spectrum. In addition, very effective arrangements have been set up to identify and nurture very able pupils.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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 the learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys Langton Lane Nackington Road Canterbury Kent CT4 7AS

2 December 2005

Dear Pupils

Thank you for the pleasant way you received us during the recent inspection. Particular thanks go to those who gave up time to talk to us and to the tutor group whose classroom we took over.

We enjoyed visiting the school because it does many things well.

- Standards are exceptionally high and you are making good progress.
- The school gives you exceptionally good opportunities to develop your personal and academic skills through the curriculum and other activities.
- The school is well led and continues to improve.
- Teaching is good overall; in many subjects it is sometimes outstanding.
- The vast majority of you show very positive attitudes and behave maturely.
- You play a very significant role in helping the school run its affairs, and supporting schools in Africa and close to home.
- Your governors support and guide senior staff very effectively.

There are one or two areas which are less successful.

- In some subjects at GCSE the results are not as high as they should be, because teaching is not challenging enough and subject leaders do not monitor this closely.
- Your progress is not tracked carefully enough.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew Lead Inspector