



Swakeleys School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102450
Local Authority Hillingdon
Inspection number 286381
Inspection dates 10–11 October 2006
Reporting inspector Gill Close HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Clifton Gardens
School category	Foundation		Hillingdon
Age range of pupils	11–18		Uxbridge UB10 0EJ
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01895251962
Number on roll (school)	1052	Fax number	01895235027
Number on roll (6th form)	167		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Kevin Munn
		Headteacher	Mrs Sue Pryor
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	10–11 October 2006	286381

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Swakeleys School is an average-sized girls' school which offers joint sixth-form provision with the neighbouring Abbotsfield School for boys. In September 2005, it became a specialist humanities college and a new headteacher joined the school. An above average proportion of pupils comes from minority ethnic groups and speaks English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils eligible for free schools meals is close to the national average. A lower proportion than average has learning difficulties or disabilities, or statements of special educational need. The percentage of pupils who join the school after Year 7 is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Swakeleys School is an improving school that gives a satisfactory standard of education. Since the arrival of the new headteacher, systems have been put into place that have strengthened the quality of evaluation throughout the school and led to improved performance and behaviour. The school has an accurate view of key strengths and weaknesses and the major aspects of its performance. Its recent improvements have demonstrated that it has good capacity to continue to improve. Leadership and management are good.

Achievement is satisfactory; pupils make satisfactory progress to reach average standards in the main school, where the teaching and use of assessment are satisfactory. They spend too long listening in some lessons, where they are not challenged to think hard enough to make good progress. The strong initiative and reasoning that many pupils show outside the classroom is not capitalised on well enough in sufficient lessons. Assessment and targets help pupils to improve their study skills but do not focus enough on short-term subject-specific points to lead to good learning and understanding in each subject. An outstanding feature of the school is the involvement of all pupils in the work of the school council and its discussion of issues important to the school. Another major strength is the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities which have an excellent participation rate. The curriculum is satisfactory; the school recognises that its emphasis on academic courses does not meet the needs of or motivate all pupils as well as it might, so is working to broaden the curriculum. The humanities specialist school status has increased the focus on oracy and further enhanced extra-curricular opportunities. Most of its subject targets have been met but its impact in the community has been more limited than planned.

The school cares for pupils well, so that their personal development and well-being are good and they enjoy school. They contribute outstandingly to the community within school and beyond. The school has a strong ethos of equal opportunity and has worked hard to improve the confidence and performance of underachievers, some of whom have become disaffected, as they approach examinations. This has successfully enabled a substantial proportion of them to meet their targets. The school has recognised that a more robust system for setting targets and identifying underachievement early is needed. Vulnerable pupils are supported well and the school celebrates its cultural diversity. The new assertive discipline policy has improved pupils' behaviour but there remains a small amount of disruption to learning.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Staying-on rates have improved. Students' progress is good overall although it varies too much between subjects. However, it is best in the subjects with the largest student numbers. Standards show a rising trend; attainment is consistently above average in some subjects though not in all. Through good monitoring of performance, the school ensures that students

not only make progress in individual subjects but also develop their confidence, motivation and social awareness. They feel valued and know that their opinions are taken seriously. The curriculum offers a good range of academic and vocational subjects although take-up for some subjects is low. There are excellent levels of participation in a wide range of outstanding extra-curricular activities. Leadership and management are good. Students' progress is well monitored and effective action is taken if students are falling behind. The school has successfully tackled organisational difficulties arising from the shared status of the sixth form with another school, which were raised at the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- make the provision more motivating to enable all pupils to do their best, through improving the quality of teaching and broadening the curriculum to better meet their needs
- focus assessment and targets more effectively on subject-specific learning and understanding, and on identifying underachievement early

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils join the school with broadly average attainment overall; they include a higher than average proportion who have above average attainment in English. Pupils make satisfactory progress to reach average standards by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Results show improvements since 2005 at the upper levels of attainment in the core subjects, where they are higher in English than in mathematics or science. However, they did not improve at other levels of attainment. Consequently, targets were met only in English at Key Stage 3 and were not met at Key Stage 4. Many of the specialist school subject targets in English, drama and religious education were met. The strong performance in design and technology in 2005 was maintained. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to other pupils.

Students enter the sixth form with a wide range of attainment that is below average overall. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards across a range of subjects. There is some inconsistency in the number of entries and performance in A level subjects. Nevertheless, in the large-entry subjects students make particularly good progress and reach above average standards. In Year 12, students make good progress in a wider range of subjects. The specialist school subject targets were met, other than those at the highest levels in English literature.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and there is an excellent participation rate in the outstanding range of enrichment activities, which contribute to pupils' social and cultural development effectively. They take part in the rich programme of visits in the UK and abroad, which widens their cultural experience well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Whole school involvement in the democratic process, through participation in the school council, is outstanding. Pupils take on responsibilities willingly, for example by acting as mentors for younger pupils or as counsellors to deal with occasional bullying in the playground. In the wider community pupils also make an outstanding contribution through a range of activities, some of which involve them all. They raise funds, help members of the local community and work with pupils in local primary schools.

The assertive discipline policy has improved pupils' behaviour and most behave well. However, a small minority of pupils sometimes disrupt the learning of others; behaviour is satisfactory overall. Pupils understand well the importance of healthy lifestyles. This is reflected in their participation in sporting activities and preference for healthy meals for lunch. Pupils know well how to keep themselves safe. They work effectively in teams and have adequate skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) for their future lives. Attendance is satisfactory and the breakfast club has improved punctuality, which is also satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good relationship between teachers and pupils, who generally listen attentively. Teachers set clear objectives and enable pupils to produce correct work but sometimes they do not understand it as well as they might. There is variation in teaching quality, with the stronger teaching enabling good progress through using a variety of activities that are well matched to pupils' needs and good questioning focused on thinking. However, too often the work is not sufficiently challenging and the pace set by teachers is too slow to enable all pupils to make good progress. It does not encourage pupils to think hard or to push themselves to make more than satisfactory progress; for example they wait for the teacher's prompt of ideas rather than discussing and producing them themselves. Sometimes teaching does not capitalise as much as it might on the independence and reasoning that many pupils display in extra-curricular and school council activities, so they spend too much time listening. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are good.

Strong tracking has led to good support, and there is particularly strong teaching in the large-entry subjects.

Making their own self-assessments helps some pupils reflect well on what they have learnt. Together with target setting, it supports sound development of study skills. As targets and assessments are linked mainly to processes, and are sometimes too long-term or expressed too generally, they have not contributed as effectively to subject learning and understanding as they might.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum. All statutory requirements are now met. In Key Stage 4 there is an emphasis on academic GCSE courses which are not suitable for lower attaining pupils and do not motivate them. The school is aware of this and is actively seeking to widen the range of what is offered, and to further develop links with other schools and colleges so as to raise the attainment of these pupils. The use of ICT to promote learning across curriculum subjects has improved since the last inspection. The length of the teaching week is shorter than government recommendations. There is appropriate emphasis on work-related learning. In the sixth form, students have a good choice of academic courses, and the recently introduced vocational courses are proving popular.

The school's extra-curricular provision is outstanding. It offers a very wide range of sporting, cultural, charitable and other activities, and participation levels amongst all years in the school are very high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The good relationships between staff and pupils ensure that the pupils feel safe and well cared for at school. The school is vigilant about health and safety matters and relevant procedures are in place, including risk assessments. Child protection procedures are robust. Pupils with learning difficulties are identified early and supported effectively. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and their progress is carefully monitored. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school and most are happy with the progress they make. Mentoring and targeted support have been successful in raising pupils' aspirations, confidence and standards. Pupils receive appropriate careers guidance and advice on GSCE options. Sixth-form students have good guidance on their choice of course and options for higher education.

Identification through the central assessment system and consequent interventions have successfully supported groups of pupils approaching national assessments to raise their performance. These include some groups of White British girls who had

become disaffected. The school recognises the need for a more rigorous system for setting appropriate targets and identifying needs early so that support and extension may be put in place sooner. In the sixth form, the good monitoring of performance against targets has led to effective support and good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The good leadership of the new headteacher and the strong vision of where she wants to lead the school have had a rapid impact. She has introduced a range of strategic initiatives that have made a contribution to raising standards. The whole school assertive discipline policy has been put in place quickly with the support of staff and pupils, and has had a noticeable effect on improving behaviour. An emphasis on lesson planning has led to more consistent use of shared lesson objectives, starters and plenaries, which pupils recognise and welcome. Through the leadership group opening up their own lessons to observations by colleagues, a culture of observation and a system of subject-based reviews have been developed. There is a good system of self-evaluation involving staff in all departments which feeds into the whole-school evaluation. It has identified accurately key strengths and areas for improvement. Groups of potential underachievers approaching national assessments, including high attainers and disaffected pupils, have been given targeted support that has resulted in improved performance. There have been improvements in the issues raised at the last inspection: teaching quality, use of data to raise attainment and the teaching of ICT, although the school recognises that the first two remain key areas for further development. These improvements and the impact of the new initiatives indicate a good capacity to improve. The head teacher is well supported by the governing body. Governors have recently reviewed their effectiveness and recognise the need to enhance their ability to be critical friends. Finances are managed effectively on a day-to-day basis and there are suitable plans to bring back the budget from deficit.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
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 to below 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	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and telling us about it.

We found that your school is improving and is well led. It provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. Most of you are meeting your targets and those of you in the sixth form are doing well. You enjoy school and participate very keenly in the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Your school council is excellent and gives all of you the opportunity to be involved in making decisions. Through this and other activities, such as mentoring younger pupils and supporting charities, you make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. You are looked after well and feel safe, although occasionally some behaviour disrupts lessons.

In lessons you do the work set but are not always making good progress because you are not always challenged to think hard enough and sometimes spend too long listening. We have asked the school to make the teaching more motivating and challenging; you can help by trying to think harder and do better. Making your own assessments has helped you to improve your study skills. We have asked the school to use targets and assessment that focus more on how well you know and understand your subject work. You can help by thinking about this in lessons and when you make assessments of your own work so you consider carefully what to do to improve. The school is planning a wider range of courses for you to choose from in Years 10 and 11, and we think this is an important priority.

We wish you success at school and in helping it to improve.

Yours sincerely

Gill Close HMI