

Sunnydown School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125458
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	328334
Inspection dates	5–6 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

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

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Margaret Lynes

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	70
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr T M Armstrong
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2005
School address	Portley House 152 Whyteleafe Road Caterham CR3 5ED
Telephone number	01883 342281
Fax number	01883 341342

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Introduction

The inspection of the school was carried out by an Additional Inspector and that of the boarding provision by a Social Care Inspector.

Description of the school

The students are drawn from Surrey and neighbouring local authorities from Greater London. Sunnydown is a residential special school for up to 35 boarders and provides education for boys of secondary age who have statements of special educational needs. These are related to specific learning difficulties and some boys have additional needs including autistic spectrum and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. Over recent years the complexity of these additional needs has increased significantly. The students may join the school at any time. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The school has a range of awards including Investors in People, and is recognised as a Healthy School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sunnydown is an outstanding school that successfully demonstrates its aim to provide a secure, stable and well-structured environment in which students can grow academically, emotionally and socially. Because of their learning difficulties, standards reached by students are about average compared to all schools, but their achievements are outstanding in view of their starting points. GCSE results show that the value added by the school to the students' progress is consistently among the highest in the country. The outstanding boarding provision also has a positive impact upon the boarders' achievements, personal development and well-being.

The quality of teaching is excellent and is typified by good specialist subject knowledge and strong relationships. The individual attention afforded to the students' specific learning difficulties is a key factor in enabling effective access to the good curriculum. The expertise in physical education is extended beyond the school to good effect in local schools. Lessons are well planned and, typically, they are characterised by brisk pace with many opportunities for first-hand experience. Teaching assistants, some of whom have additional skills in supporting literacy, make a good contribution to the students' learning and achievement, especially when they take a proactive role in lessons. Although the curriculum is good, there is too little provision for food technology in Key Stage 3 and vocational education is limited in Key Stage 4. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of clubs and activities including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

The vast majority of students meet their challenging targets and, where they do not, the school promptly acts following a review of individual progress. Students like coming to school as shown by their good attendance. The school enjoys the whole-hearted support of the vast majority of parents. A small minority had concerns related to staff training for students on the autistic spectrum and access to after school clubs for day students. The inspectors found the school makes appropriate provision in these regards.

All the students make excellent progress in their personal development due to the well-integrated provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE). The students are proud of their school, evidenced by extremely positive relationships at all levels and excellent behaviour. The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all is excellent as shown, for example, by the school's induction programme and its regard for meeting the emotional needs of students, especially those new to boarding. School procedures, including those for child protection, ensure students' well-being is appropriately safeguarded. Careers education and transition planning prepare them for moving from one stage to the next. Students receive very effective specialist input from the school-based learning support team (LST), speech and language therapy and other specialists to improve their access to the curriculum and overall independence. However, some subject reports contain too little progress information as part of the annual review procedures.

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding due to the senior management team's commitment to improvement and response to the changing needs of the school population. The school's monitoring and tracking of students' achievement has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Although improvements are required in the curriculum, the capacity for further improvement is outstanding. The governing body gives excellent support on finance, personnel and boarding issues. However, its role as a critical friend on curriculum and

achievement matters is underdeveloped, and is not sufficiently identified in the school development plan.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of boarding at Sunnydown School is outstanding and the school meets all of the key national minimum standards. The overall management structure and the strong sense of community and mutual respect within the school contribute effectively to the welfare of the boarders. There were no recommendations made at the time of the last inspection. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding, and is an integral part of the school's ethos.

Residential students benefit from the active promotion of a healthy lifestyle, through various leisure activities and a nutritious diet. The physical and emotional needs of each individual boarder are identified and well documented. Parental consent to emergency medical treatment is sought for each boarder, and residential care staff ensure that there is regular feedback to parents. Staff adhere to clear medication administration procedures and written records are accurately maintained. Auditing systems for medication entering and leaving the school are robust.

Boarders are consulted over the menu, and all have an active role at meal times, preparing or clearing the tables, or serving food. This was observed to work very well, and enhanced the boarders' participation and sense of responsibility. Boarders spoke highly of the food provided.

Boarders' privacy is respected and information about them is handled confidentially. There are two payphones available for the boarders to use and they can also use their own mobile phones after school. Toilets, showers and baths are all fitted with appropriate locks. Boarders know how to complain, and they are clear that they have a number of staff to whom they can turn if needed. The boarders can also directly access an independent advocate who visits the school on a regular basis. External support agencies and helplines are widely advertised around the boarding provision.

There are robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place. The school has a designated child protection officer, and all staff receive regular safeguarding training. The school has a strong non-bullying policy in place. Incidents of bullying are promptly dealt with and appropriately recorded. The vast majority of boarders commented that they felt that bullying was always dealt with. The school has a suitable policy in place regarding boarders who are absent without authority but there have been no such absences since the last inspection. Sanction and restraint records are appropriately maintained. There is a well-understood and popular reward system in place, and the boarders showed good awareness of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Residential areas are safe from unauthorised access. Restrictors are fitted to windows above ground level. Regular fire alarm tests and drills are carried out. Hot water temperatures are regulated. The school adheres to its recruitment procedure which clearly states that all new staff are subject to thorough vetting before taking up their post.

There is good liaison between the residential care staff and the teaching staff. Care staff actively contribute to the individual boarder's educational progress, and support the boarders with a study and reading period each evening. Teaching staff are encouraged to participate in residential life, and a number of them provide after school activities. There is an excellent 'Fit 4 Life' programme in place which prepares the boarders for life once they have left school.

Boarders spoke very positively about this, and about the support they receive from the residential staff in general. Boarders commented that the school was 'brilliant, fantastic', they 'got to do so many things', and they 'did not want to leave'.

The boarders can choose from a wide range of after school activities. They are consulted about the options available, and a number of the boarders said that they enjoyed school because of all of the things they could take part in. During the inspection, because of the inclement weather, the boarders could not take part in outdoor activities. They were observed enjoying a variety of indoor pursuits including a sing-along and guitar session. Participation and social interaction between all the boarders is encouraged and promoted. Staff take great care to make the residential part of the school day as homely as possible, while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

Boarders' views are sought in a number of ways, including through annual reviews, termly interviews with key workers, weekly school council meetings, through the confidential suggestions box, the independent advocate, governor visits, and parents' evenings and through the boarders' notebooks. They are helped to learn about their rights and responsibilities through a variety of avenues including through representation on the school council, work experience and fundraising.

There are practices in place to welcome new boarders to the school, to help them settle in as quickly as possible. Boarders who reach school leaving age have their imminent departure celebrated with a special activity which has been chosen by them. Each boarder has a detailed care plan. The boarders play an active part in preparing this plan, and can access it at any time.

The residential accommodation is bright, cheerful and homely. Great effort has been made to involve the boarders in choosing decor, fittings and furnishings. The comfortable feel is enhanced by displays of boarders' artwork.

Staffing levels are acceptable, and staff are enabled to attend relevant training courses. Almost all of the care staff have achieved at least a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level three award in care. There is good provision for the effective monitoring of the welfare of the boarders, both by the head of care and externally by a representative from the local authority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum by increasing the provision for food technology for all Key Stage 3 students and offering wider vocational choice in Key Stage 4.
- Ensure the governors' role in monitoring achievement and the curriculum is strengthened and identified in school development planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

At the end of the last academic year, students in their final year took GCSEs in a number of subjects including English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). Just under half gained five or more passes with grades A to C and the vast majority gained grades A to F. Success was also achieved in a number of Entry Level certificates in English and ICT. In recent years the students' achievement has been ranked amongst the highest performing schools nationally for 'added value' which rates the academic progress made by students between Year 7 and Year 11. This represents outstanding achievement in view of their starting points. Accreditation is also gained in vocational studies within the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) at Bronze level. Routine analysis indicates that there are

no significant differences in progress made by any individual or group. Students also make excellent progress in meeting challenging targets within their individual education plans that have a suitable emphasis on language and literacy.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The students make outstanding progress in their personal development as they respond well to the excellent relationships between themselves and staff, displaying very positive attitudes. Unauthorised absence is low and attendance is good. Students respond well to the many sporting, artistic and other cultural opportunities in and out of school. They have an excellent understanding of the value of exercise and healthy eating because of the extensive PHSE programmes and regular opportunities to take part in physical exercise. The school's work to achieve Healthy School status is indicative of its commitment to students' health. Teams and individuals representing the school in competitive sports achieve good levels of success.

During exceptional weather conditions the students showed a mature appreciation of health and safety in heavy snow and displayed excellent behaviour that is also evident in lessons. They fully understand and respect the school's systems of rewards and sanctions. Membership of the school's council is taken seriously and students feel involved in making decisions that affect them. Racial harmony and close friendships are very evident throughout the school community. Students respect the needs of others within the community and make a positive contribution by support a home for the elderly and a local special school. All students, and especially boarders, make excellent use of the community for arts, sports and recreation. All boarders live up to staff expectations for contributing to the smooth running of residential areas by willingly carrying out day-to-day responsibilities, such as laying tables and keeping bedrooms tidy. The students feel safe and feel they have a trusted adult with whom they can share concerns during the school day and evenings. In discussion, comments included, 'I like the help I get here, especially the one-to-one lessons...it's better than my last school, I feel I can really get on here.' They suggested improvements including having lessons where they can learn to cook and lockers where day students can keep their belongings.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The high-quality teaching and learning throughout the school are key factors in its success. Teaching and care staff use their experience and expertise most effectively to provide excellent conditions for learning. Expertise in the physical education department is used to good effect for the benefit of other schools in the area. Relationships are strong and expectations are high in relation to work and attitudes to learning. Lessons are well planned and take good account of individual learning needs. All lessons give extensive opportunities for students to develop literacy and numeracy irrespective of the subject. Good use of ICT is also evident in, for example, conducting research into global warming in GCSE science and throughout the school to create most attractive displays of work that inform and motivate students. Teachers go to considerable lengths to ensure the students know how their work will be marked by assessors. For example, in English, the students study grade descriptions and successfully deduce what kind of performance relates to each grade. Many effective lessons begin with teachers clearly stating

what they expect the students to learn in each lesson. The students' work is highly valued and often used to create attractive and informative displays around the school.

The LST provides excellent support to students and staff. Students respond well to the tasks and make good use of their own target cards that clearly show how they can be successful. The deployment of teaching assistants, some of whom have higher-level status, is particularly effective when they join in lessons, which serves as a good role model for students. Good support is given to students' studies through supervised homework after school hours.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is successful in enabling the students to make the most of their academic abilities. The strong provision for developing students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT increases students' access to other subjects. In addition to academic courses, there is a limited vocational provision for older students that is taught through an ASDAN programme. The school's attempts to improve this position with its local consortium partners are yet to yield new courses. The school's improved specialist facilities for science and design technology have had a positive impact on the curriculum provided. However, the lack of specialist accommodation for food technology reduces students' access to the subject.

The curriculum is enriched by an extensive programme of activities after school. All students receive regular opportunities to take part in the arts and physical activities. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and 'Feel Good Week' provide excellent opportunities for outdoor pursuits and personal development. There are very good programmes to prepare students for the next stage in their lives, for example, those for students in Key Stage 4 who undertake carefully chosen work experience and enterprise activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The students' care, support and guidance are outstanding. The school has extremely detailed knowledge of the students' progress in all areas. The ethos of the school, strengthened by the nurturing boarding ethos, provides very well for the physical and emotional well-being of day students and boarders. Academic reporting is undertaken regularly and much information is fed back to parents and students during consultations and annual reviews of statements. In written subject reports, there is sometimes too little information about progress made in the subject and they focus overly on attitudes and behaviour. The school has well-developed systems to assess how well the students develop in literacy and personal development. There is excellent support from outside professionals and agencies, enhanced by the school's own provision of extra input for specific learning difficulties from the LST. Older students receive very good support and guidance as they are about to take the next steps in their lives, with all students who left last year going on to further education or training.

The school enjoys the support of the vast majority of parents. Despite the difficulties posed by the distance from many students' homes, the school has achieved Surrey's 'Working in Partnership with Parents' award. Written comments submitted to inspectors included, 'We have noticed a huge change in our son...we had high hopes for our son and these have been more than fulfilled...the care staff provide a supportive extended family.' A small minority expressed concerns about access to after school clubs for day students and staff training to meet the complex needs of their children. The inspectors found that day students do stay after school

and managers have agreed to re-emphasise the availability of after school clubs, subject to transport arrangements. Furthermore, the school does seek to ensure it is staffed by suitably qualified and experienced personnel. Systems to safeguard students are robust and all checks made on staff are appropriately recorded.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leaders and managers from education and boarding provision provide a clear sense of direction that is readily shared by all staff, particularly the appropriate response to the changing needs of some students. The headteacher maintains a high profile in all aspects of school life. The focus of school development planning is successfully designed to improve the impact of education and care upon day students and boarders. The systems for self-evaluation have improved since the last inspection. For example, the quality of teaching and boarding provision is kept under regular review and all staff are subject to rigorous performance management. The school has also improved its analysis of each student's progress by staff redeployment and the recent introduction of computer-assisted analysis to ensure intervention is prompt when required. As befits a school with Investors in People status, all staff benefit from regular opportunities to develop their abilities to meet the changing needs of the students - for example, training to increase the collective understanding of the autistic spectrum. Links with the community are effective, although planned improvements to the vocational curriculum within the school's local consortium have not been fully implemented. All students undertake community service, which includes running drama workshops with primary pupils and supporting students with severe learning difficulties in a local special school. Students also work with local elderly residents and some staff use their expertise to benefit other schools in the region. These initiatives are highly regarded and aid community cohesion. Governors visit the school and work closely with senior staff. They have an increasingly clear view of the strengths of the school and the developments needed, especially in their role as a 'critical friend'. Their monitoring role in personnel and finance is clearly identified within the school development plan, although in relation to the curriculum and students' achievement it is underemphasised.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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 learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Sunnydown School, Caterham, CR3 5ED

Thank you for helping me and my colleague find our way around your school last week. It was a real pleasure for us to see just how well you are doing in your outstanding school and also in boarding provision.

I was so pleased to see how well you all do at school and thank you so much for the warm welcome on two very snowy days! It is clear that you enjoy your lessons. All the staff work very hard to help you learn. The quality of teaching is outstanding and this helps you to do as well as you can. Your behaviour is excellent and attendance is good.

You make outstanding progress and you told me just how much you enjoy learning. You really appreciate the support you get with reading that helps you in your subjects. The vast majority of your parents told me that they, too, are happy with the work of the school. I know you enjoy the responsibilities given as school councillors. The staff do all they can to make sure you keep fit and healthy. I enjoyed talking with you and can see why you enjoy your school meals so much. I have passed on your request for lockers and I am also asking the school to do a couple of things with the aim of making your school even better.

The points for improvement are, firstly, to see that all of you in Key Stage 3 have food technology lessons and older students have more vocational options. And secondly, I am asking the governors to be even more involved in knowing what you learn and how well you are doing in class.

Good luck!

Yours faithfully

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector