

Swakeleys School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102450
Local Authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	335903
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1058
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elaine Massey
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Pryor
Date of previous school inspection	0 October 2006
School address	Clifton Gardens Hillingdon Uxbridge UB10 0EJ
Telephone number	01895 251962
Fax number	01895 235027
Email address	swakeleys@hillingdongrid.org

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	23–24 September 2009
Inspection number	335903

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, its analysis of students' progress and attainment, and policies concerning safeguarding procedures. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 150 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

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

- the quality of learning and progress, particularly for White British girls
- the impact of strategies to improve outcomes for disaffected students and those exhibiting challenging behaviour
- the impact of teaching and the curriculum in promoting outstanding outcomes for the most and least able students
- the quality of care, guidance and support in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Swakeleys School is an average-sized girls' school which offers joint sixth form provision with Abbotsfield School. The school is a specialist humanities college. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the proportion of students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. This includes students who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, physical difficulties and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. There is a small number of looked-after children.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This good school has improved appreciably since the last inspection. Effective leadership and management have secured improvements in all aspects of the school's work, with the result that a very large majority of pupils make good progress in their learning. The school is highly valued in the local community and is heavily oversubscribed. This is because parents know that Swakeleys' girls enjoy coming to school and benefit from the excellent range of activities which promote students' personal development and well-being. Most pupils are proud of their school and appreciate the support they receive from their teachers. Older students speak confidently about how the school has improved during their time at Swakeleys.

A key strength of the school is the scope it provides for students to take responsibility. Large numbers of students contribute to the work of a school council which has proved highly influential in contributing to school improvement, for example through the work of committees, such as the environment committee and the uniform, transport and catering committee. Others benefit from opportunities to become prefects or by joining the Swakeleys anti-bullying committee. Junior sports leaders make a significant contribution to the personal development of younger students by visiting other schools to lead sports and games activities. The Get Active campaign, initiated by students, typifies their commitment both to healthy lifestyles and to helping the school to improve. Care, guidance and support are also outstanding features of the school and make a very significant contribution to pupil's achievement. Provision for students with special educational needs and /or disabilities has become a key strength of the school and has helped ensure that a large majority of these students make at least good progress, while, for some, progress is outstanding. The school's work to improve the achievement of a small group of previously disaffected White British girls has also proved effective, with the result that the progress of these learners is now closely aligned with the rest of the school. Very close monitoring of each individual student's academic progress ensures that all students at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and supported. The school's learning support unit and learning support mentors have proved highly effective in supporting students with behavioural and emotional difficulties and those at risk of exclusion. As a result, the proportion of students subject to fixed-term exclusions has reduced dramatically and now mirrors the national average.

The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate, though inspectors judged that school leaders have been over-generous in their assessment that the curriculum and students' achievement are outstanding. Effective steps have been taken to broaden the range of subjects offered at Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, and this has played a considerable role in increasing the enjoyment and achievement of all older students.

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

However, the school has not yet fully embraced opportunities to develop students' personal learning and thinking skills, particularly at Key Stage 3, with the result that a minority of learners are not yet provided with sufficient opportunities to work independently and in teams. This weaker aspect of provision is matched in lessons. While teaching is good overall, some teachers have a tendency to talk too much and do not fully exploit opportunities to stretch and challenge students by making them really think hard for themselves, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4.

The very effective leadership and management of the sixth form have successfully secured improvements to post-16 provision, particularly through the introduction of more rigorous systems of monitoring and tracking. However, such systems are not yet fully matched by monitoring at a departmental level and the school knows this is an area for improvement. As a result, while achievement in most curriculum areas is good, progress in a small number of subjects is merely satisfactory.

The school can point to striking improvements in all aspects of its work since the last inspection, secured through good leadership and management at all levels. Consequently, combined with the school's clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, it has good capacity to improve further

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons by:
- providing more regular opportunities for students to engage in independent learning and high-quality dialogue with their peers
- ensuring that a higher proportion of lessons fully stretch and challenge all groups of students.
- Consolidate improvements to the sixth form by ensuring that students make at least good progress in all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The school has worked hard to improve students' achievement, especially those from White British families. As a result, all groups of learners now make good progress and, for some students, particularly those of minority ethnic heritage and who speak English as an additional language, progress is outstanding.

While students enter the school with standards which are broadly average, by the end of Year 11, their attainment is above average. Unvalidated examination results from 2009 indicate that 84% of students achieved five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, which is a dramatic improvement on the good performance of previous years. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A* to C in mathematics and English is lower, but robust school tracking data strongly indicate that the improvements in recent years are set to continue in 2010.

Students enjoy most lessons because of the good relationships they enjoy with their teachers. They particularly enjoy opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and thinking, and they respond well when teachers ask them to work in groups.

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

Achievement in these lessons is consistently good. In a smaller proportion of lessons, achievement is only satisfactory because activities and resources are not devised to stretch and challenge them fully. As a result, students' ability to work independently, to take controlled risks in their learning and to make very rapid progress is not always fully exploited.

Students' behaviour is good and makes a significant contribution to their learning. The school's zero tolerance policy, together with a more appropriate Key Stage 4 curriculum and excellent provision for care, guidance and support, have significantly reduced the small number of incidents of poor behaviour. While inspectors saw good and outstanding behaviour in almost all lessons, exclusion rates remain average and a minority of students reported that behaviour is not always so good.

School strategies to improve attendance have proved to be effective and, as a result, attendance is now above average. Students have responded positively to the school's drive to improve punctuality and the overwhelming majority of students arrive on time to lessons.

Almost all students reported to inspectors that they feel safe in school. Students are confident that the very small number of bullying incidents which occur are dealt with effectively and they appreciate the support they receive from their peers through the Swakeleys anti-bullying committee. Incidents of racial harassment are extremely rare and students are keen to get on with each other. Students reported that increased opportunities to participate in activities with girls from other year groups have further strengthened the harmonious and cooperative atmosphere around the school.

Students' commitment to healthy lifestyles is exemplary. Students have been instrumental in improving the range of healthy eating options in the canteen and the take-up of school lunches is much higher than in secondary schools nationally. A school council subcommittee continues to monitor the quality of school lunches closely to ensure that they fully meet the students' determination to stay healthy. Although not all students receive the recommended two hours of physical education per week in all key stages, their very high participation rates in extra-curricular sports further demonstrates their enthusiasm for, and willingness to engage in, active living. The school's under-16 and under-18 football teams have enjoyed success in national competitions.

Students' excellent spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is reflected in their commitment to supporting each other and those less fortunate than themselves.

Students spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their work to support a school in South Africa, recently visited by a group of Year 11 girls. Their work in leading the youth interfaith group, involving schools from across the borough, is highly impressive.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The majority of teaching is securing good progress for students. Good relationships, high expectations of behaviour and students' commitment to doing their best make notable contributions to their achievement. Learning objectives are consistently articulated at the start of lessons so that students have a good understanding of their learning goals. In some lessons, though, learning objectives do not maximise students' achievement because they are overly focused on the work to be done rather than the learning goals to be achieved. Teachers make good use of technology to support learning and, in a number of lessons, the interactive whiteboard is used well to promote enjoyment. In one A-level mathematics lesson seen, students supported their learning partners very effectively as they worked through challenging trigonometry questions. The teacher skilfully achieved an excellent balance between supporting students and demanding that they think for themselves and each other. Although other examples of this approach were seen, particularly in the sixth form, some teachers do not always offer sufficient opportunities for students to assess their own and each other's work. Marking is generally good and many teachers are making good use of the 'what went well, even better if' system. However, opportunities are missed to allow students to respond to written feedback in their books. All students are very clear about their learning targets because these are given a high profile on the front of their exercise books.

Improvements to the curriculum have helped ensure that the needs of students who prefer to study more vocational subjects are now met more effectively than before. An increasing range of BTEC qualifications are offered and a small number of students

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

benefit from opportunities to take courses at Uxbridge College. The school has successfully delivered its own nail-care course to better meet the needs of a small number of girls for whom a more academic curriculum is less appropriate. Provision for students' personal, social and health education has very recently improved, with lessons now delivered by specialist teachers. Although this change has been in place for only a few weeks, students say that they have already noticed significant improvements to these lessons. The school has been relatively slow to respond to increased opportunities for curriculum flexibility at Key Stage 3, and, as a result, provision to encourage independent learning in lessons is not fully established. School leaders recognise that tutor periods are not used effectively to promote learning but plans are in place to remedy this in the near future.

The humanities specialism has played a considerable role in improving teaching, the quality of learning and the curriculum. Specialist subject departments have been instrumental in driving up the quality of teaching and initiatives to improve students' oracy and literacy skills have proved to be effective.

Transition arrangements into the school are extremely strong and are valued by parents and students who are new to the school. Year 7 students, who have been in the school for only a few weeks, were fulsome in their praise for the support they have received so far. Safeguarding procedures are robust and the school works effectively with external welfare agencies to ensure that more vulnerable students receive the support they need. Looked-after children are well cared for and achieve in line with other girls. The school makes excellent provision for the very small number of learners with complex physical needs, and staff receive training to ensure they understand how best to provide appropriate support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and her senior team have proved to be very effective in improving outcomes for all groups of learners and they enjoy the respect of the school community. Safeguarding procedures fully meet statutory requirements. A particular strength is the school's work to promote community cohesion. A wide range of provision is in place to promote racial and religious tolerance within the school community and the school's annual humanities week typifies the commitment to celebrate diversity at every opportunity. As a result, the school is an extremely harmonious community in which

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

students from a wide range of backgrounds get along very well together. School leaders' commitment to promoting equality is reflected in the school's success in remedying the lower achievement of a small number of White British girls. Examination results are regularly monitored to ensure that no groups of learners are disadvantaged. Monitoring of equalities at departmental level is not yet as strong. School governors offer good support for the school and are able to challenge school leaders regarding aspects of their work.

The school's success in securing sustained improvement since the last inspection, its well-focused development plan and the commitment of all stakeholders to raising standards still further, aptly demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

This good sixth form has consistently ensured that the majority of students make good progress. Students are given good preparation for the world of work through opportunities to work independently and in groups more regularly than in the rest of the school. Success rates and attendance have improved and, last year, every Year 13 student successfully completed the academic year. This is because individual progress is closely monitored. The curriculum is increasingly inclusive and this is reflected in the steadily increasing number of students who are choosing to join the sixth form. While enrolment for some subjects is low, the sixth form offers good value for money because these courses are not easily available elsewhere. As in the main school, extra-curricular provision is excellent and many sixth form students engage in opportunities to keep fit

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

and to contribute to the community.

While achievement in most subjects is good, and in psychology and media studies it is outstanding, there are a small number of subjects where students do less well. The school is taking appropriate action to address this, though inspectors judge that the school has not taken action quickly enough to ensure good achievement in all curriculum areas.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

A similar proportion of parents responded to the Ofsted questionnaires to that seen in secondary schools nationally. A very large majority of parents are highly supportive of the school and the quality of education their children receive. Most parents say that their children enjoy school, feel safe and make good progress in their academic work and personal development. A very small minority of parents made critical references to the school's uniform policy. However, 86% of parents who responded to the questionnaire judge the school to be well led and managed and inspectors agree with this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1058 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	23	106	1	5	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	46	31	92	61	5	3	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	34	26	86	55	15	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	26	82	55	13	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	33	22	94	63	12	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	19	83	55	24	16	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	16	96	64	17	11	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	36	24	85	57	10	7	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	19	94	63	13	9	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	23	86	58	14	9	3	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	15	79	53	21	14	6	4
The school is led and managed effectively	36	24	93	62	8	5	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	33	83	55	8	5	3	2

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



Dear Students,

Inspection of Swakeleys School, Hillingdon, UB10 0EJ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave the inspection team during our recent visit to your school. We enjoyed seeing you at work in your lessons and listening to your views in meetings and when you talked to us at break and lunchtime. Here is a summary of our main inspection findings, though I hope some of you will read the full inspection report.

- Swakeleys is a good school which has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Your teachers provide outstanding care, guidance and support, with the result that you feel safe and well looked after while you are at school.
- You make good progress in your work because the curriculum is much better suited to your needs and interests than before.
- Your lessons are good overall and benefit from the good relationships that most of you enjoy with your teachers.
- Behaviour has really improved in the school and is now good, though we noted that some of you think it is not always as good as it should be.
- You make a terrific contribution to the school and wider community through your work as school councillors, SWAB members or junior sports leaders.
- The sixth form offers a good education and a good preparation for further education and the world of work.

We have asked your teachers to try to help you make even more progress in your work by:

- providing more opportunities for you to work independently and in groups
- ensuring that all your lessons are really challenging
- ensuring that students make good progress in all their subjects in the sixth form.

We wish you every success.

With best wishes

Yours faithfully

Daniel Burton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.