

Southborough High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102601
Local Authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	355219
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Merchant

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	746
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Smith
Headteacher	Sunil Chotai
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
School address	Hook Road Surbiton KT6 5AS
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and observed 28 teachers. They held meetings with a governor, staff and groups of students. They also talked to some parents and carers who were present at the start and finish of the school day. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at its improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, data on students' progress, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of school policies. They also analysed questionnaires received from 119 parents and carers and 64 students.

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

- Students' attainment and progress in English.
- How well the teaching takes account of the needs of different groups of students, and how well teachers help all students to improve their attainment and progress.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum in motivating and inspiring all students and providing challenge and interest for them.
- The effectiveness of middle leaders and governors in checking attainment, progress and teaching and contributing to the school's improvement.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than most other comprehensive schools. A high proportion of students are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and the number of students who speak English as an additional language is also high. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school gained specialist status in business and enterprise in September 2005. It has Healthy School Status. The number of students joining and leaving the school at various stages of the year is above average.

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 is a good school, where students make good progress in most of their lessons and attainment is rising. Key to this success is the introduction of rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the personal development and well-being of each student and their progress towards challenging targets. Well-targeted intervention strategies and watchful care, guidance and support enable students to meet and exceed their targets, including targets in the business and enterprise specialist plan.

Students are right to be proud of Southborough High School and relish all it has to offer, as reflected in their exceptional attendance levels. Many wrote in their questionnaires that it is 'the best school'. By the time students leave they are confident, well-rounded young people, ready to play their full part in the world beyond school.

Students join the school with below average attainment. All groups of students, regardless of ethnicity or ability, make good progress and by the end of Year 11 attainment has risen and is broadly average. However, results in national examinations have improved greatly over the last three years. GCSE results in 2010, although not yet validated, were the school's best ever. They were above average, with nearly 80% of all students gaining five or more good grades. Over 60% gained 5 or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. The school has done particularly well to improve attainment in English, which has improved sharply and is now above average.

Teachers skilfully use questioning in lessons to promote learning and to analyse and improve students' performance. Teachers mark books carefully and regularly. As a result, the advice teachers give to students on how to improve their work is effective and most students are clear about the next steps in their learning. In a minority of lessons, learning is held back because teachers do not always ensure that students are given sufficient time to work independently, to learn in an active way or to talk about their findings. Staff recognise that they have not yet sufficiently fine-tuned the use of assessment information so that the tasks they set in lessons provide maximum challenge for the potentially high-flying students. The headteacher and senior leaders are successfully developing the leadership skills of heads of department to enable them to secure more consistent achievement across subjects. However, students' insecure application of literacy skills leads to a wide variation in their attainment across subjects at Key Stage 4.

School self-evaluation is accurate and, most importantly, the school knows exactly what to do further to sustain its journey towards excellence. This, together with the successful action leaders have taken to ensure improvement since the last inspection and the strong rising trend in attainment, means that the capacity to improve further is

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good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is good or better in the great majority of lessons, by:
 - ensuring that teachers specifically plan for and extend the learning of the highest attainers at a consistently challenging pace throughout lessons
 - giving students more responsibility for their own learning by encouraging them to be more active and inquisitive in class.
- Secure consistently good achievement across all subjects by providing more opportunities for students to develop higher-level skills in writing and comprehension.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The work seen by inspectors in lessons confirms the overall picture of consistently good progress. Students greatly enjoy school, grow in confidence and develop positive attitudes to learning. They achieve well because most teachers expect much of their students and explain complicated ideas well. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 11, students were learning at a blistering pace because of the teacher's exceptionally high expectations of what she wanted them to learn and the challenging and fun tasks she set for them. The school has been successful in speeding up the rates of students' academic progress in recent years, as can be seen in the improved figures for progress over Years 7 to 11 of successive groups of students. The major factor preventing students' achievement from rising faster is the difficulty they have in explaining their ideas when they have read a text, which in turn inhibits their ability to write well.

The school is very conscious of the needs of all students and so there is very little difference in the progress made by different groups of students. For example, the work is made interesting for boys of all abilities. The school works very effectively to support students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who enter the school with particularly low levels of attainment. Detailed plans to support these groups and timely interventions ensure that they make similar progress to that of their classmates.

Pride and respect are hallmarks of students' good personal development. They develop good social and interpersonal skills and relish working collaboratively. Their well-developed understanding of right and wrong is reflected in their good and often impeccable behaviour. Students feel safe, saying very little bullying and few racist incidents occur. They develop good workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being through the curriculum, work experience and business and enterprise activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum provides good breadth and balance, is relevant to the needs of individuals and groups of students and promotes their good outcomes. It now provides vocational pathways for ages 14 to 19, including BTEC First Certificates/Diplomas in science, business and art and design. The school's specialism strongly influences the curriculum, with themed business and enterprise projects such as 'Inspired Ideas' which are well received by all students. Enrichment opportunities, including sport, music and drama, have a high take-up.

Parents agree that good attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Students are well known to staff as individuals. Their learning, personal development and well-being are monitored rigorously and their needs are met by well-targeted support. The school works closely with families, children and a range of agencies to sustain the academic and personal development of students facing challenging circumstances. As a result, behaviour and attendance have improved considerably and vulnerable students progress as well as their peers. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance for students, including careers advice, are exemplary and this results in very effective transition arrangements from primary school and into examination courses at Key Stage 4, the sixth form and beyond.

The quality of teaching and engagement with students and their learning is good. Typically, lessons are fast-paced and productive. Teaching is lively, tasks and concepts

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

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are clearly explained, and activities provide very effective challenge so that all students learn at a swift pace. The school has set up thorough systems to check on students' progress. These are used well to ensure that none is in danger of falling behind and to enable teachers to consistently set the next steps for each student's learning. Students have a good understanding of the quality of their work and what they need to do next in order to move forward. In the minority of lessons where progress is satisfactory rather than good, assessment is not used effectively to support individuals or groups. All students work at the same pace, as directed by the teacher, and this leads to insufficient challenge for the more able students. Teachers sometimes talk too much, which limits the time students are actively and independently learning, resulting in slower progress and less time for students to articulate and build upon what they have learnt by the end of the lesson.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding, and there are strengths in the senior leadership team. The headteacher, ably supported by his senior leadership team, is raising standards of attainment rapidly through what he describes as his 'unrelenting focus on standards' and his commitment to enabling all students to be 'the best they can be'. Through innovative improvements and challenging targets, he and his senior leaders have successfully raised the aspirations of students and staff. Heads of department and heads of year say they are now 'empowered to make decisions' following training in self-evaluation and improvement planning. They are developing appropriate skills in monitoring and evaluation, including lesson observation and analysing performance data, to help to address the variation in attainment between subjects. Outstanding teaching and learning in some subjects has not yet been disseminated across all subjects and a minority of lessons remain no better than satisfactory. However, self-evaluation identifies appropriate priorities, and improvement plans are well focused on improving learning through better use of assessment and developing students' independent learning skills.

Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work and the impact is tangible. Outcomes for students are good, with minimal unevenness between different groups. Robust systems for monitoring and evaluation ensure that improvements in outcomes are sustained and there is no room for discrimination.

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The effectiveness of the governing body is good. It fulfils all legal requirements and gives good attention to the welfare of students and staff. All safeguarding arrangements were found to be effective at the time of the inspection. Governors bring a wealth of relevant experience to their deliberations, are very supportive of the school and are increasingly able to hold it to account for its work.

Community cohesion is good. The school develops students' understanding of their religious, ethnic and socioeconomic community well, although more so in the local and global context than nationally. Leaders have ensured that students are developing into caring citizens who respect and value the views of others and that a set of common, shared values is embedded in every student.

Given the outcomes for students, the school deploys its staff and resources well to achieve good value for money.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form, although small, is good because leaders and managers ensure provision is effective and leads to good outcomes. The school demonstrates good capacity to make and sustain further improvements in the sixth form. The majority of students are now making good progress from their below average starting points. Variations exist, however, in the progress made in different subjects.

The high retention rate reflects the enthusiasm and pride that students take in the school, and their enjoyment of it. 'I love it here and I don't want to leave', commented a student. The mature way in which students are treated does much to foster their

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independence and initiative. Students cooperate well with each other and develop as highly confident, articulate individuals.

Teaching is consistently good and encourages students to apply independent learning skills such as research and discussion. Assessment is used well to plan lessons to meet the needs of all students. The curriculum meets the needs of the majority of students, and the take-up of BTEC courses is good. Care, guidance and support are effective because teachers invest a lot of time in supporting individual students. Any underperformance is identified and addressed swiftly and parents are involved in the process. Students are well prepared for learning and the challenges they will face after leaving school.

Leadership and management are good because regular curriculum reviews, including monitoring and evaluation of lessons, generate useful information to inform improvements in students' outcomes. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Students value the very effective information, guidance and support provided. Target setting and progress tracking promote equality and provide a robust system to sustain improvements. The sixth form is providing good value for money because its provision results in good outcomes.

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

The school and its headteacher clearly enjoy the confidence and support of those parents and carers who returned the questionnaire. A number of individual comments reflected the high-quality care, support and guidance given to students, particularly to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and the good progress made by students. The few criticisms were followed up as inspection trails during the visit. For instance, a small minority of parents and carers raised concerns regarding the help the school gave to students to enable them to lead healthy lives. Inspectors found, through discussion with a wide range of students and through lesson observations, that most students have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. A similar proportion of parents felt that the school could keep them better informed about their child's progress and involve them more in decisions that are taken at school. The school recognises that it can do more to communicate more effectively with parents. The views of the parents interviewed informally at the end of the school day confirm the positive responses in the questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Southborough High 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 746 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	37	74	62	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	49	41	69	58	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	55	46	57	48	5	4	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	39	67	56	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	50	57	48	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	30	65	55	15	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	24	20	75	63	17	14	0	0
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)	43	36	65	55	7	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	34	72	61	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	38	63	53	6	5	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	28	24	76	64	6	5	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	51	43	64	54	1	1	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	51	53	45	2	2	1	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



16 September 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Southborough High School, Surbiton KT6 5AS

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. My team of inspectors and I enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. You told us that Southborough High School is a good school and we agree with you.

You are making good progress in most of your lessons and attaining examination results that are similar to those in most other schools and, in some subjects, higher. They are getting better year on year. This is because most of the teaching is good and your headteacher and his senior teachers give you challenging targets for all subjects. They monitor your progress towards your targets regularly and support you very well if you fall behind. They have introduced more courses for you to choose from in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Your school takes good care of you. You told us you feel safe and that there is little bullying. We found that your behaviour is good and sometimes excellent. You get on very well together.

We have asked your headteacher to help you to attain even higher examination results, by:

- planning work for you that is not too easy or too hard, but just right for you and really makes you think
- giving you more opportunities to learn for yourself in lessons
- helping you to develop your literacy skills in all of your subjects.

You can help by always being ready to ask your teachers how you can improve your work. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Merchant

Lead inspector

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