

Sutton Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103011
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	323724
Inspection date	28 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Gale HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	837
Sixth form	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Shahenaz Lalani
Headteacher	Mr Gordon Ironside
Date of previous school inspection	16 November 2005
School address	Manor Lane Sutton SM1 4AS
Telephone number	020 8642 3821
Fax number	020 8661 4500

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in the main school and sixth form; developments in the curriculum; the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in driving improvement. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), assessment data, parents' questionnaires, planning documents, observation of lessons, and interviews with staff, students and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Sutton Grammar School for Boys is a smaller than average school. On entry to the school, students' attainment is well above average, representing its selective nature. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are well below average. Around a third of students are from minority ethnic heritages. About one in seven has English as an additional language, although none are at an early stage of learning the language. The school has specialist status for science and achieved Healthy School Status in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Sutton Grammar School for Boys is an outstanding school. The journey from good to outstanding since the last inspection has retained traditional academic strengths while addressing every area needing development. The quality of education provided by the school's sixth form is also outstanding. Students throughout the school make very fast progress and achieve exceptionally good examination results because teaching is very good and care, guidance and support are excellent. The school has a very positive and friendly ethos that focuses on meeting the individual academic and personal needs of all its students. This is reflected in its very strong commitment to equal opportunities and students' outstanding personal development. As one parent commented, 'This is an excellent school where my son is enthused and is loving learning. The teachers are inspiring and caring about both their subjects and pupils. The pastoral care is excellent.' Students say that the school provides a very safe, caring and friendly environment. They are highly supportive of each other and enjoy very good relationships with their teachers. The large number of responses and comments received from parents about the work of the school were overwhelmingly positive.

Students' attainment on entry to Sutton Grammar is well above average, due to its excellent local reputation and the selective system in which it operates. Competition for places is intense with 10 applications for every student admitted. Attainment in public examinations by the end of Year 11 is exceptionally high. In 2008 100% of students attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, including both English and mathematics. Many students achieve the highest grades. These results represent outstanding achievement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who have English as an additional language achieve very well, reflecting the excellent support they receive. Achievements in science and mathematics have long been strengths of the school. Work through the specialist status has maintained this and has been used to improve performance across the curriculum, so that all subject areas are producing consistently outstanding results.

The great majority of students thoroughly enjoy their education, attend very well and display extremely positive attitudes to learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Students have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives, which is developed through the strong provision made for these areas in the curriculum. Students report that incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare. When they occur, they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Students' views were reflected in the responses and comments received from parents. The take-up of the healthy eating options provided in the school's dining hall is good and increasing. There is an excellent provision for exercise through extensive sports facilities and very high rates of participation in extra-curricular opportunities. Students make a good contribution to the school community, for example through the work of the student council, which has been instrumental in bringing about improvements to the canteen. Students also make a good contribution to the local and wider community through, for example, charity work. However, staff and students both feel they could make an even greater positive contribution given more opportunities. The curriculum helps to foster strong social, moral and spiritual understanding, for example through visits, assemblies and the evolving citizenship programme. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Students develop very good basic skills to help them progress to further education, training and employment, and they are provided with excellent guidance on the choices they need to make

at various stages in their school careers. A good programme is in place to develop students' enterprise skills, including a student trade fair on the day of inspection.

The school evaluates the overall quality of teaching and learning as outstanding and observations of a sample of lessons confirmed this view. Consistent strengths of teaching are very good subject knowledge that facilitates appropriate challenge to bright students, good planning for the effective use of interactive whiteboards and very good relationships that promote excellent engagement and enjoyment of learning. Strategies are already in place to share the excellent practice that currently exists, and these are worthy of continuing refinement and evolution. A programme of curriculum development since the last inspection has placed a higher emphasis on personal development through a structured personal, social and health education and citizenship programme. Coupled with a more flexible Year 7 programme developing cross-curricular skills alongside knowledge, this has produced an outstanding curriculum.

Good progress since the last inspection is the result of excellent leadership and effective management. A parent who said, 'The school has outstanding leadership and an ethos that encourages pupils to aim for high achievement', reflected this. Senior leaders have been very effective in tackling the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection. The provision made for citizenship has been greatly improved, departmental management, review and development planning is more consistent and achievement in Key Stage 4 has risen. The headteacher and senior leaders provide strong and clear direction and are well supported by other staff. They have a very good understanding of the strengths and weakness in the school and are proactive in bringing about change. Where changes are less effective, for example early GCSE accreditation in information and communications technology, very effective self-evaluation means lessons are learnt and new plans quickly implemented. Governors provide excellent support and are able to offer help and challenge to the senior leadership team, based on their detailed knowledge and understanding of the school and the local community. Excellent systems are in place for monitoring and tracking students' progress and very effective use is made of assessment information to set extremely challenging targets and improve teaching and learning. This record of success indicates that the school has very strong capacity to bring about further improvement.

The school has developed excellent partnerships with parents and external agencies to support students' development. The school has a good understanding of the needs of the local community and its place in it. While making a strong contribution to community cohesion, for example through its outreach work, the headteacher recognises this as an important area for further development. The school is highly effective in integrating students from different religions and cultures and helping them to achieve very well. The school is making very good use of the extra resources it receives for its specialism, for example by improving teaching facilities, enriching the curriculum and through its work in other schools and the local community. The school makes very efficient and effective use of its funding and provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students enter the sixth form with well above-average levels of attainment from the main school. They make excellent progress and attain examination results that are exceptionally high. Achievement is consistently good across subjects and is outstanding overall. The overwhelming majority of students successfully complete their courses. A very high proportion of students go on to higher education, often at the most prestigious institutions. Students

achieve very well because teaching is always good and often outstanding. They are provided with excellent support, care and guidance. The curriculum is very well matched to the needs of students and responsive to their requirements, for example in the introduction of philosophy as an A-level topic. The head of sixth form provides excellent management and leadership of his tutor team. He has a very detailed knowledge and understanding of students' needs and ensures they are met as fully as possible while liaising effectively with curriculum leaders to ensure students achieve their potential. Monitoring of progress towards exceptionally challenging targets is rigorous and there is good balance between directing students and encouraging them to become independent learners. Students' personal development is outstanding and they make an important contribution to the life of the school and the wider community through activities such as the school council and mentoring younger students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for students to participate in the school and wider community and audit the uptake to develop the good start made on promoting community cohesion.

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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	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	1	
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	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sutton Grammar School for Boys, Sutton, SM1 4AS

Thank you for assisting the inspectors with the recent inspection of your school and for making us so welcome during our visit. We very much enjoyed meeting you and valued the discussions we had with you.

Our view is that your school provides an outstanding education and that you are right to be very proud of it. The great majority of you enjoy school and are excellent ambassadors for Sutton Grammar School. This is reflected in the excellent relationships between all members of the school community and the high levels of attendance you maintain. We were particularly impressed by the way the school has worked to develop you personally as well as academically. You become respectful and confident young men. Many of you enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and know how to be healthy.

You make excellent progress in your learning because you are provided with an excellent curriculum, are very well taught and are provided with high-quality care, guidance and support. Your teachers know you very well and do their best to meet your needs to ensure you achieve as well as you can. We feel that your school is highly successful in achieving its aims of doing the best for all its students.

We were particularly impressed with your headteacher, his senior leadership team and other leaders, who, together with the governors, have successfully evaluated the key improvements needed to drive the school on, and have delivered them. In order to continue to improve, we have asked the school to ensure that it further develops opportunities for you to participate in the school and wider community. You can help by taking them up.

Yours faithfully

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector