

The Sydney Russell School

Parsloes Avenue, Dagenham, RM9 5QT

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students make outstanding progress irrespective of their starting points or background.
- Students join the school with below average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They make rapid progress and achieve outstandingly well. GCSE results are high when compared to the national average.
- Teachers have very high expectations of students, and the students live up to these expectations. In lessons they are fully engaged in their learning.
- Students from a wide range of backgrounds get on extremely well with each other. Relationships between staff and students are positive and respectful.
- Students are proud of, and delighted by, their new school buildings.
- Students are given demanding targets, which they understand, and push themselves hard to achieve or exceed them.
- All leaders and managers are highly ambitious for students. They make checks on students' progress very effectively, so that they can take immediate action if any students are at risk of falling behind.
- The Chair of the Governing Body leads his colleagues well. The governors expect, and receive, excellence from the staff and students.
- Leaders' focus on improving teaching is relentless. Staff are managed so that they are constantly supported, encouraged and challenged to be better teachers.
- There is a very broad range of subjects and activities on offer for students, which interest and excite them and provide them with highly positive experiences of learning.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, and feel it is a very safe place for their children to be. The school is well regarded in the local community, and over subscribed.
- The sixth form is good, and improving. Numbers in the sixth form are increasing. Students taking work-related courses achieve extremely well. The progress of pupils taking academic courses is also good.

Information about this inspection

- The Sydney Russell School is an above-average sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are White British. The proportion from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action and at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. In this school the pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school uses the off-site alternative providers, the Erkenwald Centre and the Flexi-learning Team.
- The school is part of a sixth form consortium, The Southern Consortium.
- The school has specially resourced provision for students with autism, known as the additional resourced provision, attended by seven students.
- The school meets the government’s floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has recently undergone extensive rebuilding.

Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Olson Davis	Additional Inspector
Samuel Ofori-Keyereh	Additional Inspector
Ann Sydney	Additional Inspector
Valerie Houldey	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Inspectors observed 55 lessons or part lessons. Twelve lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders and managers.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's documents on self-evaluation and safeguarding. They observed the school's work, looked at students' books and the tracking system used to monitor students' progress.
- Inspectors considered the 15 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire, and the school's own student, staff and parent questionnaires.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in the sixth form so that it compares favourably with that in the rest of the school by:
 - reviewing the subjects and courses on offer so that they match the needs of a growing and changing sixth-form population
 - effectively using new facilities to help bring about outstanding student progress, for example by enabling all students to access computers according to their needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with literacy and numeracy levels which are below average. The school immediately puts a programme into place which addresses gaps in their understanding, so that, by the end of Key Stage 3, students make outstanding progress in English and mathematics.
- Overall, students' GCSE attainment is high because the school encourages all students to be aspirational. 'This is the school where you have to get your GCSEs, whoever you are,' one Year 10 girl said. Students' attainment in GCSE English, science, art, geography, German and history is impressive. Students attain well in their Key Stage 4 media work-related qualification.
- Students have made outstanding progress in English and science throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 over the last two years, and continue to do so. Progress at Key Stage 4 in mathematics has improved rapidly over the last year, so that some students now make outstanding progress, and all students' attainment is above average. The school has changed the way it teaches mathematics so that skills are taught in a more structured way.
- The school has worked hard over the last year to improve the performance of more-able students by grouping and teaching students in a way that is highly tailored to their needs. As a result, more-able pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in mathematics. The school has recently changed its policy for early entry to GCSE so that the potential of the most able is not limited.
- Students from minority ethnic groups and those who have a first language other than English achieve as well as their peers. Classes are organised in a highly flexible way, resulting in lessons being planned at the right level for students of all abilities, so that all students have an equal opportunity to do their best.
- The majority of disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well above their peers nationally in their best eight GCSE subjects. Teachers and additional adults understand what the obstacles to learning are for students with special educational needs, and effectively overcome them.
- In 2012, students eligible for the pupil premium funding did better in their GCSEs overall than non-eligible students nationally. In English in 2012, Year 11 students who were eligible for pupil premium funding were half a GCSE grade below their peers in the school in English and one grade below in mathematics. The school is using pupil premium funding to provide extra sessions, particularly in mathematics, to narrow that gap for the current Year 11 students. Students in receipt of the new Year 7 catch-up funding make outstanding progress. They benefit from reading with Key Stage 4 students during their morning tutor time.
- The achievement of students who attend the additional resourced provision within the school is good and sometimes outstanding. Their progress is measured constantly, so that if they fall behind in their learning in the main school they can catch up in the resourced provision.
- Students who attend off-site alternative provision make outstanding progress. They enjoy a learning experience which matches their interests, so they attend well and are always punctual.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good and has improved rapidly over the last year. Many students begin their AS-level programme with GCSE attainment below that of other students following these courses nationally. The sixth form includes an above-average proportion of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, and in some cases this slows their overall progress. Students achieve well in work-related qualifications, such as business and television production. The school needs to review which qualifications are taught, and how they are taught with the increasing numbers of students, particularly of those at risk of underachievement, in the light of new facilities, and help to bring about outstanding progress, for example by ensuring good access to computers.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching at the school is outstanding because, lesson by lesson across all subjects, it is rarely less than good, and frequently outstanding.
- Teachers keep extremely detailed records of the progress each student in their class is making, and ensure that lessons are planned so that the progress made in a previous lesson is built upon in the next.
- Students are expected to be ready to learn as soon as they enter the classroom. Lessons start with an introductory activity which is demanding and engaging, so that students make progress quickly. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson, students made rapid progress in identifying the angles of triangles within ten minutes of the lesson starting.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and an understanding of what is required to succeed in examinations. In a Year 9 English lesson, students became highly proficient writers of newspaper articles because of the teacher's understanding of journalistic style.
- Students have the confidence to work without the teacher's help. They are skilled at assessing the quality of each other's work. In a Year 10 English lesson, students critiqued each other's plans for an internet page, resulting in the quality of their plans improving significantly.
- Teachers, additional adults and students have very positive relationships. Students try hard to meet the teachers' high expectations, and are delighted when they get praised for doing this. In a Year 9 history lesson on the Vietnam War, one student whispered to her peer, 'Miss really liked my idea; I'm going to come up with another one straightaway.'
- Students with special educational needs learn well because teachers have the same high expectations of them as they do of all other students. Three students with special educational needs were carrying out brilliant group work in a Year 8 literacy lesson. One of them said, 'Miss says we always need to help each other. So we do.'
- Teaching in the additional resourced provision is good or outstanding. Teachers and other adults use materials which suit the way the autistic students learn and students enjoy their learning.
- In the sixth form, the majority of teaching is good and themes are chosen which the pupils find interesting and relevant. For example, in a Year 13 French lesson, students made good progress in learning new vocabulary when they role played an event of political significance in 1980s France.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students take their learning very seriously. They believe everybody has a right to learn, and they manage their own behaviour, and that of others. Key Stage 4 students mentor Key Stage 3 students, and help instil in them the courtesy and respect expected at the school.
- Students are very proud of their new buildings, and feel very lucky to have them. One Year 7 student said, 'These top buildings make me feel like a top person.' Students move around the buildings in a calm, orderly and mature way.
- Students appreciate the number of different people they could go to if they were upset, or if bullying occurred. They talk about support from their tutors, their student mentors, and the 'red coats', additional adults who supervise students at break time and when they have to come out of lessons.
- Students have a very thorough understanding of how to keep safe and particularly appreciate how effectively the school keeps them up to date with issues related to e-safety.
- The safety of students who attend off-site alternative provision is monitored, and their behaviour is exemplary. Students who attend the alternative resourced provision behave well. They are always welcoming to people who visit, and are eager to share their learning with them.
- Parents and staff think that behaviour is outstanding. They appreciate the fact that the school does not tolerate any discrimination. The school is very successful at working with parents to

bring about dramatic improvements for students who find behaving well difficult. One Key Stage 4 boy commented, 'Once my mum and I realised they were not going to give up on me, I turned myself around. I am a different person now.'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior managers are exacting and uncompromising in their pursuit of excellence. There is an attitude shared between all managers that there is always room for improvement.
- Teachers are set high targets to improve their teaching and nothing less than good performance is rewarded financially. As part of the programme for measuring how good teaching is, teachers are expected to justify how their lessons significantly improve the progress of every one of their students.
- Senior managers are excellent role models. They do not expect any member of staff to reach a standard that they have not reached themselves. For example, the senior managers regularly teaches in front of the whole staff to model innovative teaching techniques.
- Teachers starting out in the profession receive very thorough and effective support, which does not end after their first year of teaching, and focuses on how they would like to develop throughout their career.
- The alternative resourced provision is well managed. Communication between the main school and the provision is good, so that the support students receive is consistent.
- The school works closely with the local authority and the headteacher leads a number of its initiatives for school improvement. This means that the school makes sure it exemplifies best practice in the borough.
- The sixth form leaders and managers have been quick and accurate in identifying weaknesses and have acted on them effectively. They recognise the need for further improvement in the light of the growing numbers, and changing nature, of the student body.
- The school provides a broad range of opportunities for learning so that the individual interests and preferences of pupils are met. The school is very good at providing a clear route for students to progress between Key Stages 3 to the sixth form. One Year 10 student said, 'Here, they help you find your ambition, and then they find you the subjects you need to fulfil it.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide well-informed challenge to the school's leadership and appreciate the regular updates they receive from the headteacher on the school's performance. Governors share the headteacher's vision and are similarly excited by the potential for further improvement offered by the new build. They work with the headteacher to ensure pay increases are linked to students' progress and teachers' performance and understand what is done to improve teaching when weaknesses are identified. They receive ongoing training from an external adviser to ensure they set demanding targets for the headteacher. Governors are fully aware of decisions about how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on eligible pupils.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101246
Local authority	Barking and Dagenham
Inspection number	413462

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	1687
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Rowley
Headteacher	Roger Leighton
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 November 2008
Telephone number	020 8270 4333
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