

Inspection of a good school: Sydenham School

Dartmouth Road, London SE26 4RD

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

Sydenham School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They appreciate the support provided by teachers and other staff. Pupils are motivated and work hard. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to aim higher in all they do. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, achieve well and enjoy learning.

Pupils are attentive in lessons, and there is a calm and orderly atmosphere around the school. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff consistently use the clear system of support and sanctions when pupils' behaviour does not meet these expectations.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel happy and safe at school. If they do have concerns, pupils know who to speak to. Bullying, racism and other forms of discrimination are not tolerated. Leaders and staff work hard to resolve incidents of bullying and friendship issues if they arise. Pupils also appreciate initiatives like 'It Is That Deep', which help them recognise and tackle different forms of sexual harassment.

Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a wide range of after-school clubs, enrichment opportunities and careers guidance. This helps support pupils' wider development. The 'Debate Mate', 'Rainbow Club' and many sports clubs are examples of the varied opportunities offered by the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders provide an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. In most subjects, the curriculum is well designed and well sequenced. This provides pupils with a high-quality education, preparing them for their next steps and future learning. Pupils study a wide range of subjects from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Leaders have thought carefully about which subjects pupils study in each year group. For example, all Year 7 pupils study Latin and either German, French or Spanish. This helps to develop the knowledge pupils need for studying modern foreign languages at GCSE.

Teachers have very strong subject knowledge. In most cases, this helps them to decide what is the best content for pupils to learn, when they need to learn it and the best way to teach it. For example, in art, pupils in Years 7 and 8 focus on developing techniques and how to use different materials. They do so while studying different artists and artistic movements. This helps them to develop a deeper understanding of art and, in turn, strengthens their ability to evaluate and improve their work at GCSE.

However, in a small number of subjects, teachers do not consistently deliver the subject content that leaders expect. Pupils are sometimes confused by the order in which topics are taught. This makes it harder for pupils to know and remember more.

Pupils are well behaved and focused in lessons and around the school. They are respectful to staff and each other. Staff use the agreed systems consistently to address any disruption to learning. Learning across the curriculum typically proceeds uninterrupted.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified. They are well supported in lessons and learn the same curriculum as their peers. Pupils with SEND have 'learning passports' which help teachers to adapt lessons to meet pupils' specific needs. Pupils with SEND receive additional support in English and mathematics. Leaders swiftly identify weaker readers and provide effective support to develop their reading fluency and confidence.

Leaders provide a variety of opportunities for pupils' wider development. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships, consent, how to recognise and deal with sexual harassment and the value of respect. These topics are revisited as pupils move up through the school to ensure an age-appropriate level of understanding. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer at the school. Leaders have introduced a new system to check pupils' attendance at these to ensure that all pupils are participating fully.

Pupils receive well-planned careers guidance. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils are well informed about their next steps. For example, 'Futures Week' in Year 12 provides sixth-form students with advice on university applications, apprenticeships and career opportunities.

Leaders and members of the governing body know the school well. Staff are proud to be a member of the school. They feel that leaders support them to manage their workload and are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established an open and supportive safeguarding culture in the school. Leaders and staff are well trained to recognise and respond to safeguarding issues. Any safeguarding concerns are followed up rigorously, using effective and well-established systems. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to address safeguarding concerns.

Teachers and staff know pupils well and recognise when they are not happy or are worried. Pupils are aware of the risks they may face. They are taught about keeping safe, the importance of healthy relationships and specific local issues. Pupils know who to speak to if they have any concerns and report these readily.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not delivered in the sequence that leaders expect. This leads to pupils being confused and not achieving as well as they could. Leaders should make sure that subject content is carefully thought through in all subjects, and delivered in the sequence that leaders intend.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	100741
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10212492
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,481
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	292
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Armstrong
Headteacher	Gloria Lowe
Website	www.sydenham.lewisham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017

Information about this school

- Sydenham School is a large comprehensive girls' school, with a mixed sixth form shared with another school.
- The school is part of the 'High Performance Learning' group of schools.
- The school uses two registered providers for alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher, members of the governing body, senior leaders, subject leaders and teaching staff. An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subject areas: English, mathematics, science and visual arts. Each deep dive involved speaking with subject leaders, visiting lessons, reviewing samples of pupils' work and meeting with teachers and pupils from the lessons visited.
- Inspectors also spoke to subject leaders in some other curriculum areas.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at safeguarding records.
- The inspection team looked at the school's information about extra-curricular activities, enrichment and careers. They also met leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and the school's preventative anti-bullying strategies.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils from different year groups.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the pupil and staff surveys.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lesson changeover to gather evidence about behaviour and attitudes in the school.

Inspection team

Laurence King, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jan Shadick

Ofsted Inspector

Ian Rawstorne

Her Majesty's Inspector

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