

Southwark Inclusive Learning Service

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135260
Local Authority	Southwark
Inspection number	329066
Inspection date	22 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	80
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Peltier
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	SILS3 2 Davey Street London SE15 6LF
Telephone number	020 7525 1150
Fax number	020 7525 1190

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Southwark Inclusive Learning Service (SILS) comprises three distinct pupil referral units. The service is comparatively new; it commenced in September 2007. It initially operated as two units on two separate sites. One unit is a pupil referral unit for Key Stage 3 students (known as SILS3); the second unit is for Key Stage 4 students (known as SILS4). In September 2008, a third unit, which has its own accommodation, was added to the service. This unit is a pupil referral unit for students with social, educational and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) requiring a multi-agency approach. This unit caters for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and has been named SILS+. The service provides a full-time education for students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schooling. All students attending the service live in the London Borough of Southwark. The student population reflects that of the borough; it is multicultural with some areas of significant socio-economic deprivation and much high-density housing. Most of the students attending the service have educational difficulties and/or disabilities. Some of the students have a first language other than English, but none are at the early stages of learning English. The service is run by an executive headteacher who commenced office in March 2008. Each centre has its own headteacher, two of whom only started their posts three weeks ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Southwark Inclusive Learning Service (SILS) provides a satisfactory level of education. There are, however, some good features, including a good curriculum and good provision for care, guidance and support. The various developments of this new service have been managed well and the transition from three units to one overall service has proceeded quite smoothly.

Students entering the service have usually had a disrupted education and their standards of work are at least below, and frequently, well below average. Prior to joining SILS, some students will have had very little formal secondary education and, for some, there are no records of their prior attainment in English, mathematics and science. Although unvalidated examination results in 2008 were below average, most students left with some examination passes and a significant number of students were able to progress to further education courses. Since the service's inception, staff have worked hard to establish academic monitoring procedures and target setting is rigorous. The progress students make overall is satisfactory, and for some it is better than this. Those who attend regularly tend to achieve well and make good progress but, for a minority, their poor attendance severely restricts their progress. Success with individual students stems from the good and improving care, guidance and support. A good aspect is that each student's work and conduct is regularly monitored and recorded. Such monitoring enables staff to intervene quickly if things are not going well. Equally, the information is used to offer praise and encouragement. There is a very good reward system in place and student responsibility is encouraged well. Good support helps the students to progress to the next stage of their education, or to enter the world of work. This includes good guidance on career choices.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but there are some good aspects. In many lessons, students are taught well, but there is too much variability in how literacy is promoted. Many students have difficulty with literacy skills and they do not write well and have restricted vocabularies. Where learning is particularly good, members of staff ensure that there is a strong focus on developing literacy skills, but in other lessons, the same degree of care and emphasis is not apparent. Staff work hard to make lessons enjoyable and many students benefit from the small size of the classes and the individual support offered.

A good curriculum successfully meeting students' needs, is provided. Students are able to study a reasonable range of GCSEs and good provision is made for the teaching of citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The service has worked well with a range of partners to establish a good vocational curriculum and is keen to enhance this provision. For example, staff identified the potential for a vocational course in horticulture and a small, on site, project, commenced last year. This will be extended to develop environmental work and mini-business enterprises.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The service is continually seeking ways of encouraging the students to become more involved and to take responsibility for their own actions and their immediate environment. At SILS+, for example, the students have already this term established their own code of conduct setting out rules and expectations about conduct. The other units have undertaken similar work. This contributes well to community cohesion and is an excellent way to encourage the students to take and accept responsibility. Community cohesion has also been promoted well via a parenting support group, which has proved to be a popular innovation. The service acknowledges that there is more work to do on other aspects of community cohesion but a good start has been made.

Most students said they like attending the service and that they find the staff friendly and helpful. Many appreciate the individual attention they receive. Each centre is very clean and tidy reflecting the desire of all staff to provide high quality facilities, where the students can be proud of their achievements. The good moral and social development of students is reflected in the good behaviour seen during the visit and in the good relationships existing between staff and students. Improvements in personal development are reflected in the rising attendance rates and improved punctuality of the students. Staff work very hard to encourage high levels of attendance and the rate of attendance has improved significantly since the service started, but it remains well below average because of the very poor attendance records of a few. A small number of responses were received to the parental questionnaire. These were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the service. One respondent commenting on the good support and help from SILS wrote 'I really don't know where I would have been without them all.'

A new leadership and management structure started only three weeks ago. Leadership and management are satisfactory and are improving rapidly. The service is very well led by a charismatic executive headteacher who, in turn, is very well supported by the three unit heads and by all other staff. The management committee is supportive and is keen to develop its role as a critical friend. It aims to support the service's work while challenging it to secure and sustain improvements. Planning for improvement is thorough. A reasonable development plan exists, though it needs to place more emphasis on how students' standards will be improved. Outcomes are not always explicit or measurable. There is a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. All staff are working hard to change the lives of vulnerable youngsters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by ensuring that in all lessons there is a consistent and sustained approach to improving the students' literacy skills.
- Modify the centre's development plan to ensure that strategies to improve standards and achievement are clearly stated and that outcomes can be carefully measured against targets.
- Raise the attendance levels of all students to that of the best.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most students have experienced considerable disruption to their education prior to entering the service. Significant work is undertaken to encourage the students in each unit to adopt good study practices. The students receive considerable support and they are offered appropriate opportunities to study GCSE and other qualifications. Some students are able to gain some higher GCSE grades in their examinations. At both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the range of courses available offers the students appropriate opportunities to be reintegrated into mainstream education, or progress to the world of work, or to further education. Overall, standards are below average but are improving. The progress students make overall is satisfactory. Some, especially those with good attendance records and who are punctual, are making good progress in their work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most students engage in a friendly manner with each other, staff and visitors. Whilst many enjoy the security offered by the service and feel safe, attendance, and punctuality to lessons, is unsatisfactory. Some students have excellent attendance records, but a minority do not have good habits in respect of attending school and being punctual to their lessons; this is having a detrimental effect on their learning. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. This aspect of personal development is promoted well through assemblies and the students are constantly encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions. Behaviour around the school is good.

Participation in physical activities is very good and the students enjoy activities as diverse as horse riding and yachting. They understand well the importance of physical education in keeping healthy. They know about balanced diets even if they do not always put this knowledge into practice. They have a good understanding of the ill effects of smoking and drug and alcohol abuse. The students are confident that their views matter and consider they have good opportunities to talk to adults when necessary. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is no better than satisfactory because of the difficulties the students continue to encounter in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but is good in Years 10 and 11. Where learning occurs at a good pace and staff expectations are high, students are fully involved in the lesson and are keen and eager to participate. Learning is enhanced in those lessons where staff place considerable emphasis on literacy development, by highlighting and displaying key words and concepts and ensuring understanding. However, this is not done with sufficient consistency and where words and terms are not properly explained, the pace of learning slows. The classrooms are peaceful and are well presented, so that an interesting working environment is established.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The service has been successful in quickly establishing a good curriculum that serves the varying and complex needs of the students well. The curriculum follows the National Curriculum as far as possible with the students being offered suitable opportunities to study the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A suitable range of other subjects is also available and, where appropriate, students sit public examinations. Two areas that have been developed particularly well are the provision for vocational education and extra-curricular activities. The former involves good work with further education providers, though the service is seeking ways of improving its 'in-house' provision. The latter involves a thoughtful sports-based programme that encourages participation and responsibility. Students' moral and social development is supported well through good provision in citizenship and personal, social and health education. Social development is also encouraged well through the breakfast clubs that operate at all three centres, which are popular with the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff work hard to provide high quality personal guidance for vulnerable students and their families. Extensive links with other agencies are very well organised to deal with the students' social and emotional circumstances. The centre's multi-agency approach and use of outside professional agencies successfully enhances the quality of support. Good personal and careers advice and guidance helps students back into mainstream school, or into the best options available in education, work or training at the end of Year 11. Staff act swiftly to address any anti-social behaviour such as bullying. The re-integration of students into mainstream education is very well managed. The service has developed some very good working practices with local secondary schools and this aspect of its work was praised by their headteachers. Though many procedures are still being developed and refined, a good tracking and monitoring system is in place and staff keep accurate records of the progress students make in terms of their work, behaviour and attendance. Such monitoring is of good quality; it helps to shape the programmes offered and contributes well to the progress students make.

All current Government guidelines on child protection are fully met. Provision for ensuring health and safety is good. Staff work hard to improve both attendance and punctuality, but the poor attitudes of a minority adversely skews the overall attendance figure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The quality of provision is improving rapidly but, given that the management team is new, many of these improvements are recent and not yet fully embedded. Day-to-day management of each unit is good and there is an overwhelming desire to seek improvements and to ensure that the lives of the students, and their parents and carers, are improved. The school knows its strengths and areas for improvement. An effective development plan has been established, though it lacks a sharp focus on raising standards. Some of the desired outcomes are not sufficiently explicit, so that they can be readily measured and reported on. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made in little more than a year. The management committee provides valuable support. Its members are prepared to challenge and they are keen to ensure that improvements continue and are sustainable.

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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
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

02 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Southwark Inclusive Learning Service, London, SE15 6LF

Thank you for the welcome you gave us on our recent visit. We enjoyed learning about the work you are doing. We have concluded that you are offered a satisfactory standard of education, but one that is improving and that has some good features. The service is very well led by the executive headteacher and he is very well supported by the heads of each unit and all the staff. They are all working hard to help you. Your standards of work are below average compared with national standards; however, you are making satisfactory progress in your studies. Some of you, especially if you attend regularly, are making good progress. You are offered a good curriculum and the support and encouragement offered to you is good. You benefit from satisfactory teaching and the service provides you with a safe and caring environment in which to work. Some of you are not helping your staff enough. Your staff are all dedicated to helping you, but some of you let them down by your poor attendance. We were pleased to see how well you behave in your lessons and around the buildings. It was also pleasing to see you enjoying your work. The site managers have worked hard to improve your facilities for you and the staff to enjoy.

We have suggested some areas for improvement. These are:

- to ensure that you are given more help to improve your literacy skills
- to make some changes to the way plans for the service to improve are made and how improvements are measured
- to make sure that some students attend far more regularly.

Thank you for your contribution to this inspection. We really enjoyed meeting you all and I would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Yours sincerely

Bill Stoneham

Lead Inspector