

# Sudbury Upper School and Arts College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124796
<b>Local Authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	315064
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 April 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Knight HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	996
School	807
6 <sup>th</sup> form	189
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs A Pizzey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Forrest
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November–2 December 2004
<b>School address</b>	Tudor Road Sudbury Suffolk CO10 1NW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 375131
<b>Fax number</b>	01787 379101

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<b>Age group</b>	13–18
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Sudbury Upper School and Arts College is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 13-18 years. With 807 students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and 189 students in the sixth form the school is broadly the same size as most secondary schools. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and about half of these do not have English as their first language. There are slightly more students with learning difficulties and disabilities than the national average and broadly the same percentage of pupils with statements. The school has specialist status for the Performing Arts and has achieved Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Investors in People and Healthy Schools.

The school is working in partnership with another local school and college to introduce major developments in the 14-19 curriculum from September 2008. In preparation for the proposed reorganisation of education to a two-tier system, the school is also working closely with its pyramid schools to ensure smooth transition over the agreed timescale.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 3**

The school has had to deal with a series of staffing challenges that have affected its overall effectiveness. While there is much good, and some outstanding teaching, parents and students are right in asking for all teaching to be at least satisfactory. Good actions have been taken by the leadership team to bring about improvements and good systems put into place, but these have yet to have had full impact on ensuring consistency and raising standards across the whole school. Hence, the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory with areas of strength.

The atmosphere in the school is friendly. Relationships are positive. As a result, most students enjoy school. They are particularly appreciative of the range of opportunities in sport and the arts. They understand about healthy living and generally act sensibly and safely in and around the school. They support each other well and feel safe. Most behave well but there are occasions, especially in lessons where there is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and management of behaviour, when some students are not engaged in learning.

Good pastoral support constantly seeks to find ways to ensure all students get the most out of their schooling. Work in sport and the arts, in particular, has had a significant impact on some students, helping to re-engage their interest and enable them to find success. However, care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall as it is not always made clear to students what they need to do to improve their work. For example, marking does not always provide enough information and insufficient use is made of homework. Students also rightly ask for other ways to be found to deal with the students who are removed from lessons and placed into their classes.

A good curriculum, developed through good links with other schools provides students with a range of different pathways. The performing arts status is also increasingly contributing significantly to the overall provision. Improved opportunities for work-related learning, work experience and enterprise help ensure students are adequately prepared for life and work beyond school.

Students make a good contribution to the school and to the community, but they, and their parents, rightly feel they could contribute much more. The School Council has many good ideas and is keen to play a larger part in the ongoing improvement of the school. The leadership team is aware of the need to ensure students' views are heard and acted on. The leadership team also recognises that parents need more information about how the school is preparing appropriately for the change to longer lessons in September 2008.

The school knows itself well and, although its judgements were generally over optimistic, it has clear and appropriate plans for further action. While there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, the overall capacity to improve is good because the good systems put in place have yet to have a full impact on standards.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

**Grade: 3**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory with areas of strength. Students are confident, mature and articulate members of the school. Their personal development is good and they are willing to take responsibilities. Over one hundred students mentor younger students with learning or personal needs. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good and outstanding teaching. In the most effective teaching, teachers utilise a blend of active learning activities and independent work that cater for the needs of all students enabling them to make good progress in lessons. However, some students admit to doing very little work beyond the school day and this fails to strengthen and extend their learning. Students' achievement and attainment is satisfactory overall.

The sixth form curriculum is good. Students can choose from an extensive range of academic courses. In addition, a small number of courses meet the needs of students with vocational aspirations. The new building, currently under construction, will significantly expand sixth form provision to include the full range of academic and vocational courses within the local federation of schools and colleges. Students receive helpful guidance about their higher education. Although it is too early to assess its effect on examination results, a good academic tracking system has been recently introduced which identifies and deals with underperformance.

The head of sixth form has made a good start in addressing some of the issues raised in the recent review. A more rigorous approach to all aspects of the work of the sixth form, including the monitoring of students' attendance, punctuality and use of study time, is contributing to an improved work ethos.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase consistency in teaching and learning and behaviour management to ensure all teaching is at least satisfactory and increasingly matches the best.
- Make sure students know what to do to improve their work through clear guidance and effective marking and use of well-planned homework.
- Enable students to contribute more directly to the overall development of the school and ensure parents always feel fully informed.

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**

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Students achieve well during their first year in the school but progress is not as rapid during Key Stage 4. Attainment and achievement are also satisfactory in the sixth form.

While the standards reached in Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national averages, standards in Key Stage 4 have varied considerably over the last three years. The percentage of students gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE was

above the national average in 2006 but it was significantly below in 2005 and in 2007. Attainment in Key Stage 4 in 2007 also varied considerably between subjects. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities, however, made good progress in Key Stage 4 in 2007, attaining significantly higher average points over a range of subjects than attained in most schools.

Students made satisfactory progress in mathematics in Key Stage 4 although the standards achieved at the end of the Key Stage were significantly below the national average. Progress and attainment in English were both significantly below the national average.

In 2007, the school's statutory targets for Key Stage 3 were met in mathematics and science but just missed in English. The targets for Key Stage 4 were missed. However, the information collected through the tracking of students' work and the work seen in lessons show that the actions taken to improve standards are starting to have a positive impact.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 3**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall. In the main school, most enjoy their education and attitudes towards work are generally positive. However, the standard of behaviour varies and is not always as good as it should be. On occasions, especially where classroom management is not effective and lessons do not engage the interest of students, the behaviour of some students distracts the learning of others. In the sixth form, attitudes and behaviour are good and students contribute well to the life of the school. For example, the School Council is led excellently by the head boy and head girl. Students feel safe and cared for. Bullying or racist incidents are rare and when they occur they are carefully recorded and dealt with swiftly and effectively. Attendance is now satisfactory as a result of the introduction of measures to reinforce the importance of good attendance.

Students are aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Healthy eating is appropriately encouraged through the provision of good and well balanced meals. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for charitable work and for mentoring and assisting younger students which contribute well to their social and moral development. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Students would like more opportunities to contribute to the work of the school, through, for example, more structured ways in which the School Council can respond to views raised by peers and feedback the outcomes of their discussions to the rest of the school. They also rightly request more attention to concerns they have expressed such as the difficulties some students are experiencing with the school uniform. The preparation for students' future economic well-being is satisfactory.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some areas of strength. Teachers generally have good relationships with their students that create a positive climate for learning in which students are confident to ask about their difficulties. There is much good and some outstanding teaching, but there is also some weaker teaching and some aspects require further attention across the school. In the best lessons, students are fully engaged in their learning through high expectations and challenging tasks. There is continuous development and assessment of students' understanding through probing questioning, and skilful and perceptive observation. Clear learning objectives are referred to repeatedly during the lesson so that students are able to focus on specific skills and understanding. Effective use is made of individual, group and whole class work and of reflective discussion during and at the end of tasks. However, in the least effective lessons, students fail to make satisfactory progress especially when the teacher tolerates low-level background chatter or tries to talk over higher levels of noise. Lessons are not always matched to the students' learning needs and students are not clear what they need to do to improve their work. Some discussions are dominated by a few students without the teacher ensuring all were involved. While some teachers regularly set and mark work, providing comments that tell students how to improve, this good practice is not carried out by all staff. The setting and marking of homework is also too varied.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs and interests of students. It caters well for the variety of students' individual needs by providing good flexibility and a wide choice of subjects at Key Stage 4. Progression routes for courses on offer are clear. A wider range of vocational subjects 14-19 is planned for 2009. Effective provision is made in Year 9 to both complete the Key Stage 3 programmes of study and to commence examination work in preparation for Years 10 and 11 and there are good links with middle schools. The provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology across the school is satisfactory. The school acknowledges the need to strengthen the assessment of citizenship, which is otherwise satisfactory.

Performing Arts specialist status has had a positive impact on 14-19 curriculum. For example, students have the opportunity to opt for three performing arts GCSE subjects. The curriculum is strengthened by a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music and increasingly in dance and drama and a range of other activities. The Sports Partnership scheme provides good links with local primary schools and there are good links with partner secondary schools. The proposed move to 100 minute lessons will provide opportunities to develop teaching practice. The school is aware of the need to fully prepare and support staff in making a success of this significant change.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There are strengths in pastoral care, such as the good support provided for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, but the quality of academic guidance varies. Students are aware of their targets, but do not consistently know what they have to do to improve their work. However, the school's developing data base is increasingly helping to provide good information to assist accurate tracking and evaluation.

There are good developments such as the increasingly well integrated work of key stage coordinators and the pastoral team. There is effective liaison with outside medical and social support agencies. Child protection requirements and safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. The school identifies students who may be vulnerable or at risk and discharges its responsibilities for safeguarding students appropriately.

Students understand why some students need to be removed from lessons but they are rightly concerned that the placing of these students into their classes can limit the attention the teacher can give to their learning. They are also correct in wanting to have more positive rewards so that credits are given for good work and not just removed for work or behaviour that does not meet that expected.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with areas of strength. Difficult decisions have been taken and strong action taken to improve the quality of provision. Good systems have now been put in place such as the well-managed data base that provides good information for staff and has improved the monitoring and tracking of students' progress. The school is sensibly ensuring that more challenging targets are set and students are encouraged to aim higher. Subject leaders are increasingly working effectively together and receiving good support from the leadership team. However, some areas are still at an early stage and the impact of all of these developments has yet to be seen on standards. The leadership of the school is under no illusions about the need to ensure greater consistency in behaviour management and the quality of teaching and has clear and appropriate plans to bring about improvements.

The governing body provides good help and support and recognises the urgent need to ensure all teaching is at least satisfactory. While many parents express praise for the school, a significant number express concerns about the quality of some teaching. Some also feel that their views, and the views of their children, are not always considered sufficiently. Increasing the role of students in the work of the school is a priority so that it can benefit more from their contribution, as is ensuring parents always feel fully informed. For example, by keeping parents informed about the way that the school is preparing for the longer lessons in September 2008 and by giving immediate attention to the sensible views of the School Council.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16–19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	<b>2</b>	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>3</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>2</b>	
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>3</b>	
The attendance of learners	<b>3</b>	
The behaviour of learners	<b>3</b>	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>2</b>	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>3</b>	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> Grade 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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>3</b>	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	<b>3</b>	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	<b>3</b>	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>3</b>	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Does this school require special measures?	<b>No</b>	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	<b>No</b>	

## Annex B



18 April 2008

Dear Students

**Inspection of Sudbury Upper School and Arts College, CO10 1NW**

We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. We were very pleased to see that most of you enjoying being at the school and agree that there are many good features, particularly in sport and the arts. While we have judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be satisfactory we are clear that much has been done already and the school is well placed to make even greater progress.

We were pleased to see that there is good, and some outstanding teaching in many subjects but this is not the case across the school. We have asked your headteacher and subject leaders to make sure that all teaching is at least satisfactory and increasingly matches the best. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you always know what you can do to improve your work, for example, by giving you clear directions when you start the work and helpful information when they mark what you have done. You can help by asking your teachers if you are not sure how you could provide a better answer, or piece of work. We have also asked your headteacher and teachers to make better use of homework opportunities so you can develop your work further through a well planned and managed homework programme. You can help by making the most of these opportunities and ensuring work is completed on time and to the best of your ability.

We were impressed by the way the sixth form students help younger pupils and how the head boy and head girl lead the School Council. We have asked your headteacher to find ways to ensure that the views of the Council are shared and acted upon. For example, we agree that attention needs to be given to your concerns about the school uniform and to your request for a more positive credit scheme that rewards good work. We can reassure you that your concerns about the move to longer lessons next year are being considered carefully and several different sensible solutions are being developed to ensure this change improves your education.

It is clear that your school knows what to do to improve the school even further. You have helped the school improve and have a key role in helping to make it even better. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely  
Anthony Knight  
Her Majesty's Inspector