

Sydenham School

Address: Dartmouth Road, London, SE26 4RD

Unique reference number (URN): 100741

Inspection report: 19 May 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard ●

Leaders have very high expectations for pupils' attendance. They ensure pupils are motivated to come to school. Leaders have implemented rigorous systems and processes that have significantly improved pupils' attendance. The school is successfully tackling and supporting pupils who have barriers to attending school regularly. As a result, overall attendance is now above national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school is calm and orderly. Leaders have successfully created an environment where pupils attend regularly, learn and behave well. Leaders and staff emphasise rewarding pupils for following the school rules. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained so that rules are consistently applied. Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive. Pupils are confident to report concerns of discrimination, bullying and harassment when they occur. These are dealt with swiftly and consistently. The school makes effective use of well-organised arrangements to help pupils who face challenges in their behaviour. As a result of leaders' inclusive approach, suspensions over time are declining. Students in the sixth form attend well, demonstrate excellent behaviour and engage positively with their learning.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders have robust systems in place for identifying pupils with additional needs. They utilise information about pupils' needs and share information effectively with staff. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and have effective strategies to support pupils and meet their needs. The school liaises with parents and carers appropriately to ensure they are involved in making decisions about the support their children receive.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported very well. Reasonable adjustments are made for pupils who require specialist resources. Staff have a highly detailed understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. The school provides additional training to sharpen staff practice and enhance the support for these pupils. As a result, staff support pupils well to succeed.

Leaders prioritise supporting disadvantaged pupils and use additional funding effectively. Staff are acutely aware of pupils' needs and provide direct support accordingly. Staff work with external organisations to ensure that pupils receive well-matched support.

Leaders ensure that alternative provision and other placements are used effectively. Precise and careful consideration of pupils' needs results in successful support being put in place that enables pupils to belong and achieve.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders are highly ambitious for the pupils and students at this school. They have embedded the core values of 'ambition, determination and respect' across the school. Leaders act with integrity and purpose in making the best choices available for all pupils to

succeed. Leaders remain determined to further strengthen pupils' experiences and outcomes. For example, when the performance of different subjects or groups of learners is not in line with the school's expectations, leaders take swift and effective action. Leaders work effectively with different schools to enhance their learning and understanding of best practice.

The governing body supports the school effectively. It holds the school to account through its journey of continuous improvement. The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements, such as safeguarding, are met.

Leaders diligently consider the workload and wellbeing of staff. They carefully monitor and review staff workload. Staff feel well supported by leaders who listen to and take on board their perspectives. Staff work with leaders to maximise opportunities to enhance the development of pupils.

Leaders prioritise professional learning for staff. Staff take part in internal and external opportunities that are focused on the key priorities of school development. Staff appreciate the dedicated time for curriculum and pastoral team development meetings to develop their own practice.

The school works effectively with the local authority and other stakeholders to ensure that pupils are safe, have additional development opportunities and develop positive aspirations. Leaders positively engage with parents and carers and remain focused on further strengthening their relationships with families.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Leaders are focused on developing pupils' character. They proactively promote a highly inclusive and respectful culture in which equality, diversity and developing cultural understanding matter. The personal, social, health and economic education is carefully designed to build pupils' knowledge. Pupils demonstrate openness, curiosity, tolerance and respect for each other. Pupils have a detailed knowledge of safe practices, including how to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Pupils are able to debate topics with clear arguments because they have a sharp understanding of the issues. Staff provide pastoral support that makes a substantial contribution to pupils' needs and wellbeing, such as supporting pupils to attend and behave well. The school's effective systems for tracking pupils ensure that the right support is put in place to enable pupils to thrive.

Staff make an invaluable contribution to the extra-curricular provision. Pupils enjoy a diverse range of artistic and sporting activities, such as football, trampolining, astronomy and chess clubs. There is a vast amount of opportunities for pupils to showcase their talents and interests through, for example, competitions, debating, exhibitions and performances. Pupils' development is further enhanced by a range of trips, visits and residential. Leaders ensure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, have access to and participate in these opportunities.

Pupils and students in the sixth form make highly positive contributions to the school. The pupil leadership opportunities contribute to different aspects of school life. For example, the introduction of a summer uniform through the involvement of the school council is an area pupils are very proud of. Students in the sixth form run a wide range of 'societies' that

support their knowledge and understanding, as well as providing opportunities to younger pupils. Pupils and students are supportive of each other. They develop mature, cooperative and professional working relationships.

The school careers provision is well embedded. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive range of opportunities. Pupils and students in the sixth form take part in work experience and are well informed about the opportunities for different careers and industries.

Post 16 provision

Strong standard 

Leaders have established a highly inclusive post-16 provision that works in partnership with a local school. The comprehensive curriculum provides a range of opportunities that cater for all students. Teaching is highly effective. Teachers have detailed subject knowledge and are highly skilled. Students' achievements from all starting points are impressive, and they develop secure knowledge and skills. Students' outcomes in published examinations are above national averages in both academic and vocational subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve very well.

Students benefit from well-considered, wider opportunities. This supports their personal and social development through access to a range of additional opportunities, which helps them to further develop their character, talents and interests. As a result, students are very well prepared for their next steps in education and/or employment.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Pupils typically achieve well over time. They achieve in line with national averages. In some subjects, pupils' outcomes are above national levels. However, this is not consistent across all subject areas.

Pupils typically acquire knowledge and skills well. They generally make progress from their starting points. Pupils who require support with their reading, writing and mathematics gain the support they need. The quality of work that pupils produce is typically in line with school expectations. Leaders are determined to further raise ambitions so that high-quality work is consistently produced across all areas.

Students in the sixth form achieve well. They benefit from high-quality teaching, and this is reflected in positive outcomes, noticeably in the vocational subjects. They achieve well in academic subjects by studying A levels. Most students continue to university or apprenticeships.

Pupils and students in the sixth form are suitably prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.

Leaders have a curriculum in place for each subject area, which is carefully planned and appropriately sequenced. Leaders have taken decisive action to strengthen the curriculum in areas where outcomes are not in line with leaders' expectations.

Leaders ensure that reading is a key priority. Pupils enjoy reading and make use of the resources available. For pupils at the early stages of reading, phonics is appropriately prioritised. Teachers typically have secure subject knowledge. They understand pupils' needs, including the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Generally, teachers use this information to make effective decisions about what pupils should learn. Staff successfully adjust and modify their approaches to support pupils with additional needs. On occasions, teachers' checking of pupils' understanding is not as effective as it could be. For example, questioning does not always fully explore and/or extend pupils' understanding or enable pupils to think more deeply. Consequently, gaps in some pupils' understanding exist, which are not fully addressed. In contrast, students in the sixth form benefit from more consistent and precise checks on their learning.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to be at Sydenham School. They enjoy attending school and make positive contributions to their learning and to the wider school community. Pupils benefit from positive relationships with staff and with their peers. They feel safe and know that they can report any concerns about bullying to staff, which are dealt with appropriately. Pupils benefit from the excellent pastoral support that staff provide.

Pupils typically develop their knowledge and skills through a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning and actively participate in lessons. The school ensures that pupils who experience any barriers to their learning are well catered for. Pupils are supported to keep up with their learning effectively.

Pupils benefit from a well-crafted personal development offer. Pupils are articulate, mature and responsible individuals. They actively participate and embrace the leadership opportunities at the school. The 'Sydenham Entitlement' ensures that all pupils benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular trips and residentials. Themed weeks such as 'culture week' enhance their ability to appreciate the wider world, different perspectives and proactively contribute to the school community and beyond. These opportunities support pupils to strengthen their character and prepare for the future. Pupils become confident, resilient individuals who can work independently but also work effectively together. Pupils especially appreciate and are proud of the visual and performing arts on offer. For example, they take great pride in participating in art sessions, and the extensive number of rock bands, drama productions and dance showcases available.

Students in the sixth form are proud ambassadors of the school. They benefit from a curriculum that caters for a wide range of needs. Students attend well and enjoy positive

experiences. Students make significant contributions to the school, including running 'societies' and supporting younger pupils in their development.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure teachers consistently check pupils' understanding to identify and address gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding so that pupils achieve highly across the curriculum.
-

About this inspection

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Patrick Cullen.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors, members of teaching and non-teaching staff and several groups of pupils during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of 5 alternative provisions, including 3 that are unregistered.

Headteacher: Emma Wijnberg

Lead inspector:

Ray Lau, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Paul Metcalf, Ofsted Inspector

David Thomas Hatchett, Ofsted Inspector

Debbie Lebrecht, Ofsted Inspector

Alan Blount, Ofsted Inspector

Rebecca Drysdale, Ofsted Inspector

Lascelles Haughton, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 19 May 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

1,507

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

1,580

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

28.98%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

1.73%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

13.93%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	48.6%	45.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	48.1%	45.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	53.4%	45.3%	Close to average

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	50.8	46.1	Above
2023/24 (final)	49.7	45.9	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	51.6	46.3	Above

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	0.10	-0.03	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.02	-0.03	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	24.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	28.4%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	22.6%	25.2%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	38.5	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	39.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	36.6	35.0	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.49	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	24.2%	53.1%	-28.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	28.4%	53.1%	-24.8 pp
2022/23 (final)	22.6%	52.4%	-29.8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	38.5	50.4	-11.9
2023/24 (final)	39.4	50.0	-10.6
2022/23 (final)	36.6	50.3	-13.7

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.49	0.16	-0.66
2022/23 (final)	-0.92	0.17	-1.08

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	94%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	98%	94%	Above

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	39.29	35.00	Above
2023/24 (final)	36.87	34.38	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	37.59	34.16	Above

A-level value added

A score showing students' progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	0.1	0.0	Close to average

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	8.2%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	8.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	8.4%	9.0%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (3 term)	26.4%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	24.1%	25.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	27.0%	26.5%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026



© Crown copyright