

# Therfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125252
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	359868
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Samantha Morgan-Price

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1312
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Clare Curran
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Willman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Dilston Road Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7NZ
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty-two lessons were observed and a similar number of teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, the current and former Chair of the Governing Body, other members of the governing body, senior staff, heads of departments and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation which included achievement and attainment data, developmental plans, the school's self-evaluation, safeguarding information and minutes of governing body meetings as well as questionnaires completed by 262 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement, teaching and assessment of average-ability students, students who need support from the school and those requiring more intensive school support at both key stages to determine whether teaching is addressing their needs and enabling them to make the required progress expected of them.
- The effectiveness of subject leaders in improving attainment in some poorer-performing subjects.
- The effectiveness of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The overall effectiveness of the school's sixth form. ♦

## Information about the school

Therfield is a larger-than-average secondary school. It gained specialist sports college status in 2005. Modern foreign languages is a link subject to the school's specialist status. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. Most students are from White British backgrounds, with only a small number from minority ethnic heritages. The number of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is low, and there are fewer than average students with a statement of special educational needs. 3

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Therfield is a caring school where students say they feel very safe. The level of care, guidance and support the school provides for all students is excellent, especially for those students who are most vulnerable and those at risk of not remaining in education. The highly effective support has enabled them to continue with their education. Preparation for students entering the school starts as early as Year 5, where pupils who require more individual support are identified quickly, resulting in early appropriate support being implemented. Learning mentors are available to students who are experiencing transition difficulties. There is a wide range of good information to help students decide which subjects to take in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

Students make satisfactory progress in their learning to achieve standards in their GCSEs, which are broadly average. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. The attainment of A\* to C GCSE grades in the school's specialist subject of sport is significantly above the national average. In 2009 the proportion of students who achieved above-average grades fell in comparison to the previous year. However, data for 2010 indicate there has been some improvement, especially in English. Students' attainment and overall achievement in mathematics did not improve.

Not all teaching enables students to achieve well. Overall, teaching is satisfactory, although many lessons observed were good, and a few were outstanding. The quality of teachers' written assessment of students' work is too variable. There is some exceptionally good marking where teachers' comments precisely identify what students need to do as a next step to improve their work, but this is not consistent within subjects and across the school. In some lessons there was very little marked work in students' books. There were some good examples seen of students being given tasks by teachers which actively engaged them and enabled them to learn well. In these lessons, teachers skilfully used group work or paired work to move the pace of learning on quickly. However, this practice was not seen throughout the school. In many lessons students sat passively for long periods of time and were not given the opportunity to contribute to their learning. In some lessons students were given insufficient challenge in the tasks they were set to complete. Teachers do not always address the differing learning needs of students to enable them to learn well.

School leaders have worked hard to broaden the curriculum, including for those more-able and less-able students. The well-thought-through initiatives in modern foreign languages enable the ethos of 'every child will have the opportunity to study a language' to be maintained. A broader curriculum, including a less academic option, is now available. Other vocational courses have been introduced in response to students' needs and abilities. The sports specialism has had good impact in enabling students, including those

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in the sixth form, to make an excellent contribution to their school and the local community. Youth Ambassadors and coaching activities give students excellent opportunities to run events, including those in primary schools, special schools and senior citizen centres. Extensive participation in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme has been a contributing factor. Students have an outstanding appreciation of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and there is wide use of the good sporting facilities. Sixth form students readily volunteer for roles as peer mentors to younger year groups.

Under the ambitious and caring leadership of the headteacher, the school has addressed the decline in results of 2009 and brought about improvements in many areas that were identified as school priorities. The achievement of average-ability boys is much improved in 2010. The robust data systems enable middle and senior leaders to have an accurate view of students' performance. The attainment levels of students in some subjects which were significantly underperforming in 2009 have shown improvement, including in modern foreign languages. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and leaders know precisely what they need to do to further improve students' achievement. This includes actions required to improve the quality of teaching and assessment, the impact of which can be seen in some subjects. The school demonstrates a good capacity to improve. There has been significant improvement in addressing some of the weaker teaching; however, leaders recognise that the rate of improvement needs to be faster in increasing the proportion of good or better lessons.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve students' attainment in the poorer-performing subjects, especially mathematics, by June 2011 by:
  - improving the quality of teaching and learning by using the good practice in teaching that exists in the school
  - increasing the use of learning tasks that actively engage students' interests, which ensure students are challenged appropriately according to their needs and ability ♦
  - improving the quality of written assessment by teachers by ensuring all work is marked regularly and marking indicates to students what they need to do to improve
  - ensuring leaders quicken the pace of improvement to the quality of lessons across the school.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are average and make satisfactory progress in their learning to achieve average standards in their GCSEs. The proportion of students who achieve five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics fell in 2009 and 2010. The proportion of boys who achieved five or more A\* to C grades significantly improved in 2010. Some subjects continued to maintain higher than average A\* to C grades in 2009 and 2010. The progress made by students requiring school intervention improved in 2010, although the progress of students requiring more

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intensive school support remained similar to 2009. Boys of average ability made improved progress in 2010.

Students learn well when they are given learning tasks which enable them to be active. In the best lessons students are given good opportunities to work independently. Very good use was made of peer assessment and self-assessment techniques where students not only marked fellow students' work, but gave constructive comments on what they needed to do to improve. In these lessons, students' good behaviour was used as a springboard to inject pace and challenge into lessons. There were, however, many instances where students were too directed by teachers, which inhibited them from making a contribution to their own learning. Where students were not challenged in their learning, they sometimes drifted off-task quickly.

Students behave well and they form very good relationships with their peers and teachers. Their good development of leadership and enterprise skills are well supported by the programmes available to them. They use the opportunities well to gain accredited coaching qualifications. Students have good opportunities to develop personal finance skills through the curriculum. Attendance levels are above average and continue to improve. Students develop well socially, morally and spiritually; however, their understanding of being part of a multicultural society is less well developed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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## How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons teachers assessed the students' pace of learning effectively. The good questioning techniques employed enabled teachers to move lessons on quickly. In these lessons the variety of tasks given challenged students to do their best. They talked confidently about what they had learnt and the progress they were making. Many students knew their National Curriculum attainment levels but not always what they needed to do to improve. Teaching assistants worked effectively to support individuals or groups of students in lessons. In some lessons teachers talked for long periods of time, inhibiting students from working independently or taking charge of their own learning. Some of these lessons lacked effective pace or challenge in the level of work students were given.

The broad and balanced curriculum is consistently under review; for example, the introduction of personal, learning and thinking skills for Year 7 students builds into an integrated approach throughout the school. There are adjustments made to the curriculum in Years 8 and 9 for those who require additional support in numeracy and literacy. Flexible options are available at the end of Year 9 providing a range of courses for students that are tailored to their interests and needs, which include vocational options such as Young Apprenticeships. The extensive use of partnerships to enhance the curriculum as well as the enrichment week involves local businesses in innovative work-related learning initiatives. There is strong and well-attended extra-curricular provision that provides good enrichment opportunities.

The good partnerships with other agencies contribute well to the school's provision of wide and varying support for students who are most vulnerable. The strategies to promote good attendance are working effectively for the vast majority of students.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

After the fall in attainment in 2009, the headteacher and her able leadership team have taken decisive action to secure better attainment. The relatively new middle leadership team are working well to improve on the 2010 GCSE results. Effective monitoring and action planning and the use of accurate data are enabling them to do so. Many subjects that dipped in 2009 have shown some improvement. For example, good actions have been taken in English, resulting in a marked improvement in the number of students who achieved A\* to C grades in GCSE in 2010. The school's attainment targets are challenging, although realistic. Leaders and managers provide a safe environment where students work well together. There are effective procedures to safeguard the welfare of students. The

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achievement gap is closing for students at Therfield. The effective work of significantly improving the achievement of average-ability boys, and ensuring that students who need school support and those requiring more intensive support receive that support, enables the school to demonstrate a good promotion of equal opportunities. The harmonious school environment is well promoted by the school leaders and they continue to seek ways to ensure that every child feels a part of an effective, cohesive school community.

Community partnerships are good in many areas of the school's work. However, the school partnerships to promote different faiths or links with different ethnic communities are not as well developed. The members of the governing body are knowledgeable about the school's work and they provide a good level of scrutiny and challenge. They contribute well to the school's self-evaluation and action-planning processes.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

**Sixth form**

The inclusive sixth form gives students who have lower grades at GCSE good opportunities to take a variety of courses and to learn well. Students enter the sixth form with levels of attainment which are below national averages; they make good progress to achieve broadly average standards in their AS and A levels. There has been improvement this year in many subjects where students were not performing as well as others in 2009. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups of students. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Students say they feel safe and are well looked after. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through their support for younger pupils and their work in the local community, especially in primary schools. Students have good opportunities for reflection, and have a good sense of fairness. They readily take on responsibilities to help the school community. They have an excellent level of involvement in charity work, counselling and



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mentoring. Regular skills sessions take place which are developing students' financial management and job-readiness skills well.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although some good lessons were seen. Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is good. In the lessons where students make good progress teachers assess students' progress well and develop their skills to assess their own progress. However, in some lessons teachers focus the learning tasks at the average attainers and do not match the work well to meet the needs of all students. The good curriculum, and care, guidance and support promote good attitudes and achievement. Teachers' assessment and monitoring of students' attainment is effective. The curriculum is constantly adapting and evolving to meet the needs of students. The school works well with local institutions to provide a broader curriculum. There are imaginative solutions for lower-attaining students and the specialism is well used in the sixth form in attracting students from other institutions. An Open University programme is also on offer. Students are prepared and supported well for learning, with daily tutor sessions that provide students with good access to their tutors. Leaders' good monitoring and evaluation of students' learning and the progress they make provides a good basis for devising strategies that are improving outcomes.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt their child enjoyed school and that the school kept them safe. A small minority of parents and carers were not in agreement that the school dealt with poor behaviour effectively. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 262 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1312 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	29	164	63	18	7	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	27	169	65	18	7	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	76	29	142	55	33	13	6	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	27	140	56	31	13	7	3
The teaching is good at this school	50	19	160	67	28	12	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	19	148	58	48	19	6	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	16	157	62	50	20	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	62	24	146	62	20	9	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	23	155	62	31	12	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	17	127	51	65	26	14	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	18	157	65	29	12	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	63	24	147	60	23	9	13	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	26	151	60	30	12	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



12 November 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Therfield School, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 7NZ**

We would like to thank you for helping us when we came to find out how well you are getting on. We particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you. We judged that your school is satisfactory and that your headteacher, the senior managers, governors and other staff are working effectively to improve the quality of education that you receive.

You achieve satisfactorily in your GCSEs in Year 11. The excellent care, guidance and support that the school provides enables you to feel well supported, especially students who are most vulnerable to underachieving. In the sixth form you make good progress to achieve well. You have an excellent understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The increased breadth of the good curriculum, including more vocational courses, have given you good curriculum choices, especially in Years 9 and 11. We also judged that the good partnerships the school makes within the community has also helped to improve your curriculum choices and has helped students who most need support. The inspectors judged that the school is a harmonious one and that leaders and managers are good in the way in which they have achieved this. We know that your school leaders are working to enable you to work with members of your community. The inspectors judged that you make an outstanding contribution to your school and local community. The extensive leadership programmes available to you contribute well to your work in the community.

We know that your senior managers have a clear understanding of what they need to do next, but there are some things that the school can improve upon to help you achieve well. We have asked your school senior managers to:

- improve your GCSE grades in the poorer-performing subjects, especially mathematics by June 2011 by improving the quality of teaching and learning using the good practice in teaching that exists in the school; using learning tasks that actively engage you which ensure you are challenged well in lessons; improving the quality of teachers' marking; and making sure senior managers make faster improvements to the satisfactory lessons.

You can continue to do your part by attending and behaving well at all times.

Yours sincerely

Samantha Morgan-Price

Her Majesty's Inspector

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