

Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110496
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356758
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Mercer HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1031
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Lawrence
Headteacher	Stephen Box
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2008
School address	Oxford Road Aylesbury HP21 8PE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 33 lessons and saw 30 teachers, held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's own monitoring and evaluation of its work, subject area self-evaluation reports, the school development plan and reports to governors. Inspectors analysed responses from 273 questionnaires from parents and carers as well as 149 responses from students and 68 from school staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The school's progress in raising students' attainment and progress to increase the proportion of students achieving the highest grades at GCSE.
- How well the school is building on recent improvements in achievement in AS-level examinations to secure further improvements in A-level examinations.
- Evidence to support the school's judgement that care, guidance and support for students are outstanding.

Information about the school

Sir Henry Floyd is a co-educational selective grammar school, serving Aylesbury and north Buckinghamshire. It is one of 13 selective schools in the local authority and slightly larger than the average sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing and is just above that seen nationally.

The school has had specialist status in performing arts since 2004, in science since 2007 and most recently has become a leadership partner school in 2009. It has also gained Healthy School and Artsmark silver awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School is a good school, which has made many improvements since its last inspection. Several features of the school's work are now outstanding because leaders and managers have built successfully on previous areas of strength while tackling decisively key areas identified for further improvement.

Students' personal and social development is a key strength of the school and contributes strongly to the outstanding outcomes for students overall. Many parents commented positively on how well the school develops their children into well-rounded people, for example, through regular participation in extra-curricular activities, arts, sports and residential study visits. One parent commented, 'this is a very happy and fulfilling school', a view endorsed by many, for whom this was a key factor in choosing this school for their children. The strong sense of community contributes very effectively to students' high level of enjoyment of school life. Many students spoke very positively about their experiences, summed up by one student who said 'we really, really do love our school.'

Predominantly good, and some outstanding, teaching enables students to make good progress and achieve well. Attainment at GCSE is high. The proportion of students achieving A and A* grades in GCSE examinations has risen markedly in the last three years and is well above the national average, although there still remains some variation between different subjects. Students make excellent progress in some subjects, for example in English, where the proportion of A and A* grades is well above average. Students' progress and examination results in mathematics have improved significantly and the proportion now achieving A and A* grades is well above average. Some students make less than the school expects in science, where the proportion of A and A* grades in physics and chemistry is similar to the national average.

While school leaders correctly judge the overall quality of teaching to be good, they acknowledge that there still remain pockets of satisfactory teaching and variations between different subjects. Actions taken to improve teaching and strengthen subject leadership have already brought about improvements in mathematics, and there are early indications of improvements in science this year. While most teachers mark students' work regularly, and some give detailed guidance on how to improve and achieve higher grades, this is not consistent across all subjects.

Outstanding care, guidance and support, including provision for the small proportion of students with special educational needs, is instrumental in enabling students to make good, and sometimes outstanding progress. Students value the high-quality pastoral care and support they receive from staff, who know them well as individuals.

Leaders and managers have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They set challenging targets for future achievement, with a

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strong focus on raising the proportion of students achieving the highest grades and ensuring progress is at least good in all subjects. The governing body is very well informed about, and monitors closely, all aspects of school performance. Governors provide excellent support and high levels of challenge to ensure the school continues to improve and reaches its challenging targets. Self-evaluation at subject and school level is thorough and clearly identifies those areas not yet meeting leaders' high expectations. This, combined with the many improvements achieved since the last inspection, demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Spread the existing good practice in assessment more widely so that all teachers give students sufficiently detailed feedback to help them know how to improve their work and achieve higher grades.
- Ensure that students make at least good progress in all subjects to increase the proportion achieving A and A* grades overall, and to reduce the variation in the proportion of A and A* grades between different subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students work very well together in lessons and through many and varied extra-curricular activities, which help those from different year groups to get to know each other and feel part of the whole-school community. Outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that students are articulate, confident and keen to take on responsibilities and leadership roles within the school. Students in the upper school and sixth form regularly act as mentors and buddies to younger students in the school, and many are actively involved in organising community events, charitable fund raising activities and projects such as the World Challenge. Students feel exceptionally safe in school, confident that any problems which may arise will be dealt with quickly and effectively. Students' understanding of healthy lifestyles is promoted well throughout the curriculum and a high proportion of students regularly participate in sports and leisure activities. Attendance is high. Most students feel the school prepares them well for their future career choices and effective information advice and guidance enable the vast majority of students in Year 11 and Year 13 to progress to appropriate higher level courses.

Learning and progress in most lessons are good, particularly where teachers have planned purposeful activities which extend students' knowledge and understanding and help them to learn independently. Students make the best progress where they are able to explore new ideas or concepts, build on existing knowledge and make new connections, and assess their own learning through self- and peer-evaluation. Good use of pair and small group work provides excellent opportunities for students to develop and discuss their ideas and opinions, debate different points of view and confidently summarise key points through feedback to the whole group. In a minority of lessons, where progress is no more than satisfactory, tasks are not sufficiently challenging, or teachers sometimes over-direct what students do. Students are not always actively engaged in their own learning and reflecting on what they have achieved and how to improve.

The school's current tracking of progress indicates that recent improvements in students' attainment, particularly of A and A* grades, are being sustained, and the school is on

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course to meet increasingly challenging targets for this academic year. Close monitoring of the performance of different groups of students shows no significant differences in attainment or progress. Excellent support for students with special educational needs enables them to make good progress overall, with a few individuals making outstanding progress.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers foster excellent relationships with students, the vast majority of whom work hard in lessons. Teachers use their sound subject knowledge to plan interesting tasks to engage students' interest and extend their understanding of key topics and related subject skills. In most lessons teachers share learning objectives with students, which helps students focus sharply on what they are intended to learn, accelerates their progress and enables both the teacher and students to assess the learning taking place. In the better lessons, teachers make good use of assessment information to plan activities and content to meet different needs and abilities, giving good support to those who need more help, but also stretching the more-able students. In outstanding lessons observed, students rose to the high level of challenge set and expected by the teacher. For example, in an outstanding English lesson students were inspired by taking on specific roles in a group performance, leading to animated and high level discussions of their work. Students then provided constructive and reflective peer feedback. However, in a few lessons students

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are not always clear about the purpose of the work, or what they are learning. Occasionally, lesson plans are more focused on tasks and activities than what students will learn. Students are sometimes all working on the same level of task, regardless of their prior learning or ability, and this hinders progress.

While most teachers mark work regularly, the quality and effectiveness of assessment remains variable. Inspectors observed some very effective self and peer-assessment, for example, in art and English lessons. Some teachers provide detailed feedback in students' workbooks, but this is not consistent across the school. In the better examples, teachers make very effective use of assessment criteria, ensuring students know how to apply these in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in their own work and that of their peers. Too often, marking in books gives too little information on how to improve or reach higher levels or targets.

The school has developed its curriculum well through thorough research on existing good practice and careful and thoughtful adaptation of this to the school's specific context. Consequently, the curriculum makes a positive contribution to students' enjoyment of school, to their achievement and to personal development, for example, through the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and residential trips available to all. The introduction of the 'Building Learning Power' programme into Year 7, and its subsequent development through the school, is contributing to improved academic results. Cross-curricular provision for literacy and numeracy is good, though less well developed in information and communication technology (ICT). The school is developing its ICT provision, based on experiences of trialling a new curriculum this year. Gifted and talented students benefit from a wide range of additional opportunities to develop their interests and extend their skills. The performing arts specialism plays a significant part in school life, through a wide range of activities and performances in the school and the local community. Participation in performing arts work contributes significantly to students' growing confidence and is highly valued by students and parents. The science specialism enables students to take examinations in three separate sciences. Where appropriate, students have opportunities to sit some examinations early and extend their studies with higher level courses.

Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute significantly to students' confidence and self-esteem and their excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pastoral support is excellent throughout the school, with strong partnerships with external agencies providing valuable additional support for the most vulnerable students. Open days and taster events help prepare new students and provide parents with clear information on school life. The school provides very good support to help students settle in to school quickly, including for those students who join after Year 7. Close tracking of individual progress means that the vast majority of students know their academic targets, and their current progress towards achieving them. High quality advice and guidance continue as students move through the school, supporting their choice of subjects for GCSE and A-level study and eventual progression to higher education and employment.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, highly regarded by students, staff and parents and well supported by senior leaders and governors, has provided a clear direction for the school to build on previous successes and improve academic standards further. Challenging targets have been set to raise standards and students' attainment has improved since the last inspection, notably in mathematics and in the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in GCSE, AS and A-level examinations. The school continues to set more ambitious targets, for individual students as well as whole school performance, and monitors progress towards targets closely. The school's current data indicate that it is on track to meet these demanding targets this year, raising standards further, including in those few subjects where leaders have identified some aspects of underperformance. The school's rigorous approach to monitoring lessons has helped improve teaching and learning. Leaders acknowledge that there is more to be done to ensure consistently good-quality marking and feedback.

The governing body utilises governors' professional knowledge and expertise very effectively to challenge the school to improve further. Regular and rigorous monitoring ensures governors are well informed and able to take effective action to secure improvements. Communications with parents are good, and many governors attend school events, such as parents' evenings and open days. A few school staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire, indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to meet with governors and increase their understanding of the role of the governing body. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and robust, with rigorous recruitment procedures and training for all staff and governors. Close attention is paid to health and safety in classrooms and workshops, and risk assessment of trips. The school keeps site security issues under regular review, and has recently introduced identity badges for school staff.

The school knows its diverse community very well and celebrates this diversity through the curriculum and specific events such as diversity week. Students participate in a wide range of activities which promotes an excellent understanding of the local community and creates a very cohesive school community. Students also develop a sound understanding of wider global issues, for example through the World Challenge and international links, though work on national community cohesion is less well developed. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of all that the school does and the school's commitment to this ensures that all receive the support they need to achieve well.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Most students in Year 11 stay on in the school sixth form and are joined in Year 12 by around 30 students from other schools. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above that seen nationally, and students make good progress overall to achieve results in AS and A-level examinations which are above national averages. Students' achievement in AS-level courses has improved significantly in recent years, with a particularly marked improvement in 2010, when many students made outstanding progress.

However, progress on A-level courses has been more varied. While students make satisfactory progress overall, compared to their prior attainment, results on a few courses are not as high as predicted from students' GCSE results. The school's monitoring indicates that current A-level students are building well on their success in AS-level examinations last year and the school is on track to increase the proportion of students achieving A and B grades in this year's A-level examinations.

Students enjoy sixth form life, as reflected in high levels of attendance and course completion. They enjoy lessons, valuing their teachers' subject expertise and how they are supported to learn independently. Most teaching is good or better, with the best lessons offering well-planned opportunities for students to extend their knowledge and understanding and evaluate this through pair and group work and reflective self and peer-evaluation. The curriculum provides a broad range of examination subjects, well-suited to students' academic needs and interests. This is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and abundant opportunities for students to develop personal and leadership skills through contributing to whole school and local community events. Students value and benefit from high levels personal and academic support. One student spoke of the 'endless support' received in making applications to university.

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Sixth form leaders have effectively secured improvements in academic standards by implementing more rigorous target setting and monitoring of students' progress, along with a stronger focus on improving attendance and creating a culture where students take more responsibility for their own learning. Students comment that this, combined with the improved sixth form accommodation, has increased their motivation to do well, and contributed to the much improved AS-level results last year.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaires. The vast majority of these were highly supportive of the school, noting particularly how well the school helped develop their children into confident and well-rounded young people and how academic performance was improving. The overwhelming majority agree that the school is well led and managed, that their child is safe at school and that they are well informed about their child's progress, though they were less unanimous when considering whether the school helped their child to have a healthy lifestyle. A few raised concerns about the variations in quality of teaching, particularly when supply teachers were used. A few indicated that while communications with the school were generally good, communications with individual staff were not always followed up promptly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir Henry Floyd 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 273 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1031 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	171	63	89	33	8	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	153	56	114	42	5	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	183	67	81	30	6	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	152	56	109	40	8	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	120	44	140	51	8	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	102	37	141	52	20	7	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	25	169	62	19	7	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)	125	46	121	44	7	3	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	133	49	119	44	12	4	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	108	40	136	50	13	5	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	94	34	139	51	11	4	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	144	53	115	42	4	1	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	178	65	85	31	5	2	4	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



25 May 2011

Dear Students Inspection of Sir Henry Floyd, Aylesbury, HP21 8PE

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for making us so welcome and helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you in your lessons and around the school. We have taken your views and those of your parents and carers and school staff into account in arriving at our judgement that your school, including the sixth form, is good and some aspects of the school's work are outstanding.

We were particularly impressed by the way the school helps you to develop into confident, articulate and mature young people, and how many of you make a very positive contribution to the school and wider community. In addition, you achieve well academically; examination results at GCSE, AS and A-level have improved since the last inspection and many of you achieve the highest grades. However, the school is aware that this varies between different subjects and we have asked the school to ensure that you make equally good progress in all subjects.

Teaching is good and you work hard and enjoy your lessons. Many of you commented on how well teachers know you, and provide very good individual support. Most of you know your targets and how well you are progressing. Many teachers make good use of peer assessment in lessons so that you can evaluate your own learning, but the quality of marking and feedback in books is variable. Not all teachers give enough detailed advice on how you can improve your work, or achieve higher grades, and we have asked the school to make sure that the best assessment practice is spread across the school.

Given your very positive attitudes towards school, we are sure that you can help the school in its bid to improve even further by doing your best in every subject and by acting on feedback given to help you achieve the best results possible.

With best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Janet Mercer Her Majesty's Inspector

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