

Erith Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136330
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	373138
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Glynis Bradley-Peat

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2017
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	null null
Headteacher	Julie Turner
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 50 lessons, observed 46 teachers and held meetings with the principal, senior leadership team, teaching staff, members of the governing body and students. They observed the school's work and looked at students' books. The inspectors checked documents including the school improvement plan, systems for tracking students' progress, safeguarding documentation and school policies. They also analysed information from 378 questionnaires from parents and carers, in addition to those received from staff and students.

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

- What leaders and managers are doing to address differences in progress for particular groups of students in English and mathematics?
- What current data show about the rates of progress in English and mathematics?
- Whether all groups of students achieve as well as they should and if teaching caters well enough for their needs.
- What leaders are doing to ensure that government targets are exceeded?

Information about the school

Erith is larger than most secondary schools. It is a non-selective school within a selective area. The sixth form is a part of a consortium of three schools. The largest group of students is of White British heritage, with the remainder coming from a wide variety of different heritages. One in ten students, an average proportion, speaks English as an additional language. Few of these are at an early stage of learning the language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. Almost half of all students, a proportion much higher than that found nationally, have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These are mainly moderate and specific learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional, and social problems.

The school has specialist mathematics, computing and sports status and a further specialism in applied learning. The school has gained a number of awards including Healthy Schools status and Sportsmark.

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

The effective leadership of the principal and her team has ensured that the school offers a good standard of education for its students. Most teachers agree with inspectors that the school is well led and managed and overwhelmingly report that they are proud to be a member of staff. As a result of better rates of progress, over the last three years, the percentage of students gaining five A* to C grades has risen considerably and is now significantly above average. The picture when English and mathematics is included is also improving steadily and the school is narrowing the gap between its results and those attained nationally. The school's own reliable tracking data indicate that this trend is set to continue. Students' achievement is good. In the sixth form, students also reach average levels of attainment but there is a pattern of better achievement in vocational subjects than at A level. Nevertheless, students' progress in the sixth form is improving as a result of better teaching and assessment.

Learning and progress in lessons is good because teachers' subject knowledge is strong and, in most cases, expectations of what students can achieve are high. Teachers check students' understanding and promote progress through questioning. Sometimes, however, teachers miss opportunities for targeted questioning to challenge the more able and make them think deeply about their work. The school is fully aware of this and is working alongside staff successfully to provide support and direction. However, in some subjects there is still too much satisfactory teaching, for example in mathematics. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their peers and in some cases exceed it. Their needs are well catered for and barriers to their learning are minimised by excellent levels of care, guidance and support. External agencies are utilised well by the school to ensure that the most vulnerable are able to make good strides in their learning. There are excellent systems in place for child protection and health and safety which ensure that students learn in a safe environment. The school's outstanding expertise in safeguarding is recognised locally and shared with other schools.

Students are offered a range of pathways that meets their needs well. These include a range of applied learning and vocational programmes. Specialist status has resulted in greater investment in resources and specialist rooms to support the curriculum. It has resulted particularly in a greater range of vocational courses, with an emphasis on information and communication technology (ICT). Students' basic skills are not always developed well enough across a range of subjects. This, along with their average levels of attainment, demonstrates students' adequate preparation for the future. The curriculum is enriched through a range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended and enjoyed. Many of these enhance students' healthy lifestyles and contribute well to their personal development. This reflects work carried out to gain the Healthy Schools award and Activemark. Students have participated in trips such as a visit to a synagogue and the

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launch of 'The Holocaust Explained' which has extended their knowledge of other cultures. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Regular self-evaluation ensures that leaders' views of the strengths and shortcomings within the school are accurate. Data about students' performance are collected regularly and used within student performance meetings to identify priorities and to identify those students at risk of underachievement. The school sets challenging targets and evaluation of its performance against these is rigorous. As a result, it realises there is more still to be done to ensure attainment rises further and progress accelerates. Information from monitoring activities, such as lesson observations, is used regularly and with accuracy to identify what the school does well and to plan for improvement. Governors play a full part in this process. The school's hard work has also been rewarded and is reflected in improved attendance figures which are now above average. The school has tackled the areas for improvement from the last inspection report well. These actions demonstrate that there is good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress across the school, particularly in mathematics and in the sixth form by:
 - moving the remaining satisfactory teaching to good and good to outstanding by July 2012
 - raising the challenge for the more able so that they all reach the levels of attainment of which they are capable
 - ensuring that teachers' written feedback consistently informs students about what they should do to improve.
- Ensure students are better prepared for the next stage of their education or the world of work by ensuring that levels of basic skills improve and that these are applied effectively across all subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From well below average starting points on entry to the school, students make good progress overall by the time they leave or move on to the sixth form in Year 11. Attainment is also improving. This is supported by lesson observations and scrutiny of students' books. In some subject areas, for example in the creative arts, progress has improved year on year and more recently has been outstanding, promoting high levels of attainment and enjoyment. This is because teaching has become increasingly effective. English and mathematics have also improved this year and students are making good progress overall, although this is not consistent across all year groups. Good teaching in a Year 10 mathematics lesson encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students worked well in pairs on a practical measuring activity. They showed high levels of perseverance and as a result made good progress in understanding the relationship between the circumference of a circle and pi. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress because of effective additional support from teachers. Those with behavioural and emotional difficulties and those with specific learning difficulties make particularly strong progress as a result of finely-tuned individual education plans. Those students who

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speak English as an additional language are supported well by teaching assistants and consequently also make good progress.

Students behave well, are keen to learn and say that teachers go the extra mile to help them. They feel that their voice is heard and that action will be taken when there are concerns about their work or their personal development. Students say they feel safe and enjoy their education. They have the opportunity to take on responsibilities through serving as prefects or becoming school councillors for example. Some students have been selected to serve on the Bexley Children's Parliament. As a result they make a good contribution to the school and local community. Students enjoy the opportunity to play in teams and to contribute to showcase creative arts activities, for instance 'Erith's Got Talent'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Teaching is good and is improving steadily. In the majority of lessons teachers provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively to solve problems and to discuss their solutions. In a good science lesson about friction in Year 10, for example, students worked well together in groups. The activity planned by the teacher involved modelling using marbles on different surfaces and students had good opportunities to hypothesise. An outstanding music lesson in Year 8 ensured students made excellent progress in interpreting mood and acquiring keyboard skills. The teacher's well-chosen piece of music

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ensured students were both motivated and surprised by the intensity of sound. In a few lessons, more-able students do not make the progress they are capable of because tasks are not demanding enough. In these lessons students are all given the same work. While there is good evidence of oral feedback to students in a high proportion of lessons, written feedback in books indicating how students can improve is not as consistent.

The curriculum is increasingly effective at meeting the needs and interests of all students. The BTEC qualification in sport has also been successful with more students gaining qualifications at level 2. This is good improvement since the previous inspection. More is being done to ensure that the specialist status focuses more closely on supporting work to improve mathematics.

There are clear, successful policies to encourage good behaviour and a strength of the school's provision is the exemplary support and guidance given to students who present challenging behaviour. There is excellent support for students who have special educational needs and, as a result, most make good progress and some outstanding. This enables them to catch up with their peers successfully. The few students who are at the early stages of learning English also receive high-quality support. In addition to very strong pastoral support provided by staff, the school makes excellent use of a wide range of outside agencies to support vulnerable students and their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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 principal's determination and desire to improve the school further is inspiring. As a result, senior leaders communicate the ambitious vision for the school very clearly and it is shared by all. Systems to hold staff to account for students' achievement and progress are good as a result of the improved system for tracking students' progress. The well-considered raising achievement plan is revised frequently to sharpen its impact on improving students' performance and, as a result, attainment is rising and the gap narrowing between the school and the national picture. Training has had a good impact on teaching and the quality of middle leadership, and leaders ensure all staff are involved in self-evaluation. Consequently, teaching is improving and learning and progress are beginning to accelerate.

The school works successfully to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to learn and that discrimination is eradicated. It works diligently to remove any differences in achievement between groups of students but is aware that the more able do not always achieve as well as they could. Within the local area the school promotes community cohesion very well. The school takes its role in local community seriously and it has

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initiated a wide range of activities that support health and well-being for the wider community. Students understand the nature of diversity at national and global levels. Governors participate fully in the setting of the school's priorities and are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met, particularly those for safeguarding students. Safeguarding is exemplary because the school pays excellent attention to all aspects. There are highly effective policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and all staff have high levels of awareness of all aspects of safeguarding.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The consortium arrangement affords the provision of a good curriculum, which is able to offer an appropriate variety of courses and opportunities for the students. Students are happy with the school and this is reflected by improving retention rates. Attainment is above average for those students following more vocational routes, but is a little below average for the greater numbers who take AS and A levels. Students are particularly successful at A level in art and design, design and technology, psychology, and in vocational courses. Students engage in a range of activities over and above their course programmes that build self-esteem. They are positive role models to the rest of the school community, for example by leading committees of younger students who review school practices. Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of students are particularly effective in ensuring they are able to learn well. As a result, many of the outcomes in relation to students' personal development are good and attendance is well above average. Considering students' starting points, students make generally satisfactory progress during their time in the sixth form. However, strongly improving teaching and rigorous assessment are beginning to promote improved rates of progress. In an outstanding Year 12 drama lesson, for example, students presented their monologues to

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the rest of the group. The peer assessment by students, coupled with high quality feedback from the teacher, ensured students made exceptional gains in their learning.

The learning conversations initiated with students this year, combined with learning walks, have given leaders a sharper focus on identifying and modifying the gaps in outcomes among different programmes. Weaknesses among subject areas are known and increasingly effective interventions are put in place, for example the programme changes for ICT introduced in 2010 have led to better outcomes for the current Year 12.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Approximately a fifth of parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The rate of response was low. Of these, a very large majority expressed positive views about the school. Most say their children enjoy school and that they are happy with their child's experience. Parents and carers feel well informed about their child's progress and believe the school to be well led and managed. A few parents and carers raised concerns including the help afforded to them about how they may support their children's learning. Some felt the school did not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. A few felt the school did not take sufficient account of their views and concerns or deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that students adopt healthy lifestyles and that behaviour in the school was generally well managed. Nevertheless, the results of the questionnaire were brought to the attention of senior leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Erith Secondary School 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 378 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 2017 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	101	27	225	60	43	11	6	2
The school keeps my child safe	116	31	233	62	22	6	5	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	131	35	211	56	24	6	7	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	31	203	54	45	12	8	2
The teaching is good at this school	78	21	229	61	43	11	8	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	83	22	212	56	56	15	9	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	15	238	63	60	16	8	2
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)	89	24	230	61	28	7	8	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	91	24	223	59	45	12	10	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	22	209	55	52	14	15	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	18	206	54	62	16	11	3
The school is led and managed effectively	97	26	223	59	37	10	10	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	134	35	185	49	41	11	14	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



30 June 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Erith School, Erith DA8 3BN

On behalf of the inspectors and myself, I would like to thank you very much for the way you made us feel welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work. We very much valued the discussions we had with you. You and your parents and carers told us that Erith School is a caring place where you feel safe. Most parents and carers feel that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors judge that the school provides a good standard of education.

Even in good schools some improvements are needed to ensure that you all achieve as well as you can during your time there. The great majority of you are making good progress and GCSE results are improving and approaching national averages. Those of you who take other qualifications at the end of Year 11 achieve well. However, some of you, particularly those of you who are more able, are not always challenged effectively in your lessons. Sometimes you are all given the same work, which means some of you don't make as much progress as you should. The school has been asked to raise attainment and accelerate progress by improving the satisfactory teaching to match the good and outstanding teaching that we saw. We have asked the school to prepare you better for the next stage of your education by making sure that you have opportunities to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills in a variety of subjects.

You too can play your part in improving the school by working hard and striving for the best results you can. We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Glynis Bradley-Peat

Lead inspector

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