

The FitzWimarc School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115338
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	395655
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Keith Brown

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Ellis
Headteacher	Ken Newcombe
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Keith Brown	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector
Mandy Snook	Additional Inspector
Joanna Tattersall	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 44 lessons taught by 44 teachers. A number of lessons were observed jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Inspectors scrutinised students' work and held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body, staff and the school's local authority adviser. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents, including policies and procedures relating to the safeguarding of students, self-evaluation records and assessment information. The inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires from staff, students and 402 parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized secondary school. It serves students living in the south of Rayleigh and the surrounding area. The great majority of students are of White British heritage, with a very small number at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The proportion of disabled students and those who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school specialises in mathematics and computing. It meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

Among its awards the school has Sportsmark Gold, Friends of the Forces National Youth Award and National Healthy School Status.

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	1
Achievement of pupils	1
Quality of teaching	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- The FitzWimarc School is an outstanding school. It has improved since its last inspection, where it was also found to be outstanding. The school provides an exceptionally calm, supportive and caring environment for students and is an important part of the local community.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge motivates students to work very hard and achieve outstandingly well. Most students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make outstanding progress. The school's GCSE or equivalent results are well-above average.
- Teaching is outstanding. Students are fully engaged and learn very enthusiastically in all their subjects. Teachers are seeking to raise the proportion of A* and A GCSE grades by increasing the challenge offered to the most able students. The school makes excellent use of its mathematics and computing college status to enrich and extend learning across all subject areas.
- Students' outstanding behaviour makes an exceptional contribution to the safe and positive learning atmosphere. Students are respectful of each other's differences and behave maturely around the school. They take enormous pride in their school. Students feel safe and their parents and carers agree. Attendance is above average and students are punctual to lessons.
- The curriculum is excellent. It makes a major contribution to the students' academic success and to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enabling them to develop into thoughtful, responsible and mature young adults by the time they leave school.
- The headteacher and leaders at all levels have exceptionally high expectations and provide outstanding leadership and management. Leaders have concentrated on raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection with conspicuous success. There is a culture of continuous improvement, founded

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upon outstanding self-evaluation, very effective performance management and well-focused professional development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teachers challenge the most-able students more effectively, so that the proportion of GCSE A* and A grades increases.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with attainment that is broadly average. They achieve outstandingly well and make exceptional progress. The school's overall GCSE performance has continued its upward trend since the last inspection. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been significantly above average for three consecutive years. The school's excellent monitoring system indicates that GCSE or equivalent results this year will also be well above average. It is typical of the school's aspirational approach that leaders have recognised that GCSE attainment at A* and A grade level could be raised still higher. A training programme to help teachers to challenge the most able students in all year groups is being developed. In the school's specialist subjects, GCSE performances in mathematics and information and communication technology have been very strong in the last three years.

Students have excellent attitudes to learning, they settle to work very quickly and concentrate extremely well. They try really hard even when they find the work difficult. For example, in an outstanding Year 8 mathematics lesson, students persevered and were able to identify and discuss the key features of some quite complex factors and prime numbers. There is no significant difference in the progress made by different groups of students. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are closing the gap on students nationally. This is because tasks are matched closely to their ability levels and teaching assistants are deployed well. They support students expertly by providing both challenge and encouragement, demonstrating skills precisely and teaching subject-specific vocabulary.

Students across all subjects are very adept in using their literacy skills because teachers plan for such opportunities and students are very keen to respond, including reading aloud to others. The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires agreed that their children are making good progress at the school and that their needs are very well met.

Quality of teaching

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Parents, carers and students express great satisfaction with the quality of teaching at the school. Teaching is at least good and is outstanding in a large and growing proportion of lessons. Areas from the previous inspection that limited the grade for teaching have been successfully addressed.

Teachers develop excellent relationships with students that build their confidence and encourage them to participate. They convey very high expectations for students' effort, behaviour and the presentation of their work, and use examples from everyday life to focus learning. This contributes effectively to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Excellent planning of the curriculum supports teaching well and provides regular opportunities for teachers to emphasise the importance of students' literacy and numeracy skills in lessons and tutorial time. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which they use to set very clear objectives and to plan relevant activities, including carefully modified work for disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Lessons are characteristically active and varied and often inspirational in the approaches used. Teachers provide students with criteria for success that are closely linked to their target levels. They use questions expertly to check students' understanding. For example, in an outstanding Year 10 science revision lesson the teacher engaged students' interest through a challenging starter activity before using a small group activity for students to practise examination tasks, and then used excellent questioning skills to ensure students had a secure knowledge of crude oil and hydrocarbon chemistry. Marking of students' work is exceptionally thorough and helpful; teachers use praise well and provide very clear guidance for improvement. Teachers complete regular reviews of students' progress and give students frequent opportunities to assess their own work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students typically behave exceptionally well in and around the school. There are clear procedures which staff and students follow, resulting in the very high standards that are set for behaviour being maintained consistently. Behaviour in lessons is usually exemplary and contributes to highly effective learning. Students listen very well to each other and show respect and maturity for their peers and adults. A very small minority of students, and their parents and carers, say that, in a very small number of lessons, a few students behave inappropriately. Leaders track such incidents robustly and tackle any misconduct quickly with sanctions and rewards to motivate sustained, good behaviour. School records show the success of these actions.

The needs of students whose circumstances make them most vulnerable and potentially disaffected are met well. This is a result of the well-focused approach of the school's Student Support Centre together with effective liaison with external agencies. The number of permanent and fixed term exclusions has fallen steeply since the last inspection. The school can point to clear examples of where it has

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helped students to manage their own behaviour better, so that their progress in lessons has improved. Almost all students who responded to the questionnaire said that they feel safe at school and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree. The school's clear anti-bullying policy is rigorously enforced. Students report that bullying is restricted to rare instances of name-calling, with no homophobic or racist intent. There is highly effective teaching about all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and the dangers of the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Students' above average attendance is being sustained because of rigorous strategies to follow up any issues.

Leadership and management

The FitzWimarc School is led exceptionally well. The headteacher is very ably supported by the deputy headteachers and the leadership team. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses very well. All staff work together outstandingly well and are focused unswervingly on students' achievement and how to improve it. Morale is very high. An excellent culture of delegated decision-making and regular consultation means that staff at all levels have confidence in, and the support of, senior leaders. Several middle leaders have taken up the offer of a fixed-term position on the senior leadership team to widen their outlook of school management.

Regular and rigorous lesson observations, followed by informative feedback, are highly effective in helping staff to hone their teaching skills. Excellent use of the outcomes of these observations ensures that professional development is particularly well-focused. Methods of assessing performance are very thorough and are used very effectively to secure improvement. Data are used very accurately to monitor and improve the performance of individual students, curriculum areas and the whole school.

The governing body challenges school leaders very effectively from an exceptionally well-informed position on how well the school is performing. Members of the governing body play a significant part in school life by regular visits, through meetings with staff, and by accompanying school trips. Promotion of equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work, creating a harmonious and positive atmosphere. The school is inclusive and there is no evidence of discrimination.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is extremely well matched to students' needs and aspirations and promotes high academic achievement. Students enjoy the regular themed days and weeks. For example, the Year 7 'International' day helped students to learn much more about the world's cultures, foods, dancing, clothes, languages, currencies and religions. The curriculum is extended by an outstanding range of sport, art, music and dance activities, as well as by visits and visitors, that promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.

The school's robust arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. Outstanding leadership practice and an exemplary track record since its last inspection fully illustrate the school's excellent capacity to improve further.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The FitzWimarc School, Rayleigh, SS6 8EB

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our time with you. A special thank you goes to those of you who shared your views with us through questionnaires and in conversations. Your views have been very helpful.

The school is providing an outstanding education for you. The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Teaching is excellent and leads to your making outstanding progress and reaching above average standards in your Year 11 examinations. Your attendance rate is higher than in most secondary schools. Most students behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. You told us that you are happy and feel very safe at school. You are gaining a wide range of skills which are preparing you very well for the future. At the same time, you are developing into very mature and aware citizens.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined for the school to become even better. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that all the school's leaders consistently drive forward the improvements in examination results, particularly the percentage of GCSE A* and A grades. You can help by coming to school every day. Do continue to work hard and try your best. Please check your work carefully and tell your teachers if you need them to explain any of the work in more detail.

I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Brown
Lead inspector

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