

Gillotts School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137921
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	395820
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Hill

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	878
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Walden
Headteacher	Catharine Darnton
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Hill	Additional Inspector
Andrew Bird	Additional Inspector
Sally Hall	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 32 lessons taught by 32 teachers, four of which were joint observations with the school's senior leaders. Meetings were held with the school's senior and middle leaders, six groups of students and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at current data on students' performance, planning documents and students' work. In addition, inspectors scrutinised the safeguarding, attendance and behaviour records. They analysed the 208 questionnaires received from parents and carers along with others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Gillotts School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. A much smaller-than-average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. The percentage of students entering and leaving the school at other than the conventional times is slightly higher than the national average.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Gillotts School has specialist status in mathematics and computing and in languages. It holds a number of awards including Investors in People.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Gillotts is a good school. Standards have risen and subject leaders are more adept at monitoring and evaluating their areas. The school is not outstanding because teaching has not secured sufficiently rapid progress for all students. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades at GCSE is too variable.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding where teachers match their planning closely to students' capabilities. Where teachers do not use attainment information to precisely plan lessons, students' progress is variable, particularly for higher-ability students. Most teachers mark students' work. However, precise targets and opportunities for students to respond to the marking are inconsistent. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.
- Students' attainment is above average. Standards in English and mathematics are high with a higher-than-average proportion making the expected progress from Key Stages 2 to 4. In 2011, more than two thirds of Year 11 students gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and a much higher-than-average proportion of students attained the English Baccalaureate. Though the proportion of students gaining the highest GCSE grades, A* and A, is lower than expected, achievement is good overall.
- Most parents and carers consider behaviour is good; a minority expressed concerns. Inspection evidence supports the view that behaviour and students' attitudes to learning are good. Teachers deal with any poor behaviour quickly and effectively. Students feel safe and engage positively with the many opportunities the school provides.
- The governing body's and headteacher's determined approach to eradicating mediocrity ensures they know the school's strengths and together recognise the current challenges. Leaders and managers are successful in raising achievement and improving teaching through the effective performance management of teachers. However, a robustly analytical approach to evaluating the consistent implementation of priorities is underdeveloped for all leaders.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the proportion of outstanding teaching and eliminate satisfactory teaching by modelling and sharing the good practice that already exists within the school to:
 - ensure all teachers use the high quality data available to plan lessons that are closely matched to the capabilities of students, particularly those of higher ability
 - provide opportunities for students of all abilities to deepen their understanding and strengthen their knowledge throughout the lesson
 - enable all leaders to be equally expert in a robustly analytical approach to monitoring and evaluating the consistent implementation of development priorities.
- Raise the proportion of students who achieve the highest grades at GCSE by:
 - focusing leaders at all levels, including governors, more sharply on using the evaluation of students' progress against national benchmarks to systematically target areas for improvement
 - ensuring all teachers provide precise written feedback as to what students must do to achieve their targets and develop opportunities for students to respond to teachers' marking.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with skills and attainment that are significantly above average. The subsequent progress of lower-attaining students is particularly strong. The large majority of parents and carers consider that their children are making good progress and inspectors endorse this view. Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is very high and well-above average in English, mathematics and science and most other subjects which students study at Key Stage 4. Similarly, standards are above average for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

Students' achievement is good overall; higher-ability students make better progress in science than in English and mathematics. The school's languages specialism is a strength. Students make exceptional progress in their chosen modern foreign language. As they do with their information technology skills; almost all students gain A* to C grades at GCSE in the subject. The higher-than-average uptake of history at Key Stage 4 is linked to its consistently high standards at GCSE. In a Year 9 lesson, students made exceptional progress because of the teacher's detailed lesson planning which set high expectations and met students' individual learning needs

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well. While students completed their evaluations of a range of historical source materials independently, the teacher circulated asking carefully focused questions that challenged students' interpretation. This both sharpened students' analytical skills and strengthened their understanding rapidly.

Work seen during the inspection showed good progress over time for almost all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The large majority of students have high levels of skills in reading, numeracy and literacy when they join the school at age 11. There are integrated opportunities throughout the curriculum to extend students' reading and literacy skills. Numeracy developments are less cohesive. In lessons, students communicate clearly and with confidence. The school's intervention programmes to raise the reading-age and writing skills of those students who join the school with lower-than-expected standards at age 11 are effective. Lower-ability students make progress at a pace greater than their peers. Increasing the progress of higher-ability students is a focus for the school.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good overall and improving. No inadequate teaching was observed. Teachers know their students well and relationships between teachers and students are mutually respectful. The majority of students and their parents and carers agree that students are well taught. The best lessons are sharply focused on learning with sequential activities carefully matched to students' prior attainment. Students' knowledge is extended and their understanding deepened through appropriately pitched questions which take their learning forward. Where the teacher matches the next stage of students' learning carefully to their responses, the pace is brisk. All students in these lessons, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, are actively engaged in learning throughout the lesson. In a Year 8 science lesson, students were revising the effect of microbes and disease. Students were able to complete a range of stimulating activities confidently because the teacher's thoughtful planning was well matched to the range of students' abilities. Each student was actively challenged to discuss and learn from others in the group as each had to record their own learning while working collaboratively. Each activity had extension sections for those students who had a good grasp of the basic concepts. When students were hesitant about the explanations, the teacher supported students to improve both their study skills and their understanding by the skilful redirection of students to their previous notes. Nonetheless, across the school teachers' planning and reshaping of students' learning to deepen their understanding and strengthen their knowledge throughout the lesson is inconsistent.

Social and moral development is promoted effectively through students working collaboratively in carefully balanced groups and the coordinated curriculum. For example, students consider their response to the Holocaust in history and drama concurrently. Opportunities for students to develop their own ideas through discussion and activity-based lessons are frequent including in the mixed-age philosophy groups. In a Year 9 drama lesson, students rose to the challenge of

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reflecting on the group's progress before formally setting homework for other group members. Homework is regular and makes an important contribution to students' learning.

Evidence gathered from a wide range of students' work showed that their work is mostly marked, including pointers for literacy. Detailed feedback with subject-specific targets matched precisely to students' next steps was evident in the best examples. Some teachers give students the opportunity to reshape and improve their work; nevertheless this is inconsistent.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students value the cohesive community of mixed-age tutor groups. They are considerate of different needs, respect other people's views and eagerly take up the leadership opportunities offered. Younger students appreciate the support of older students in the tutor groups, particularly during their transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Students know how to keep safe, including internet safety. The Fire Brigade's information sessions for Year 11 students has raised their awareness of the potential hazards of reckless behaviour. Students say they feel very safe in school. Students' questionnaires and those of their parents and carers endorse this. Students have a keen awareness of the range of potential bullying. They are adamant that incidents of bullying including physical, cyber, homophobic and emotional are rare. They are confident in turning to staff for help and state incidents are dealt with effectively. The atmosphere in the school is friendly and welcoming.

A minority of parents' and carers' responses indicated that disruption in lessons affected their children's learning adversely. The inspection's findings of behaviour typically do not endorse this view. Inspectors observed students following well-established routines in lessons, working keenly and responding maturely to one another and to teachers. However, when the teaching is not sufficiently well matched to students' capabilities, the pace of the lesson slows and engagement wanes.

The number of exclusions has fallen; internal exclusion follows a well-defined system and is infrequent. Students say the school's Gateway supports them well through restorative justice programmes and counselling. They think the school rules are clear; some think they are reinforced over-zealously, as do some parents and carers. Students' achievements are widely recognised. 'Students of the week' are announced in house assemblies and accumulated house points result in the award of house colours for students to wear. Students' attendance is above average. Effective systems for supporting students and their families are rooted in strong inter-agency partnerships, including Nomad. Consequently, very few students are persistently absent and lateness is almost eradicated.

The school's motto, 'non nobis solum' ('not by ourselves alone'), lives strongly in students' good behaviour, their commitment to one another and eagerness to achieve highly together.

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Leadership and management

The governing body holds the school's senior leaders strongly to account and, with the headteacher, is tireless in its commitment to raising standards for all students. This shared bond ensures that they tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunities effectively. Through reconfiguration of the curriculum and activities to raise aspirations, the refocused attention on higher-attaining students is effectively narrowing the gaps in the progress between higher-, middle- and lower-ability students. Likewise, refocused support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs has successfully accelerated their rates of progress. The school shows good capacity for further improvement and an understanding of the need to track students' progress astutely to inform sharply targeted interventions.

Staff performance management is focused effectively on continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning. Most teachers value the school's approaches to improving their teaching, particularly the small research-based, Teacher Learning Communities, groups. The quality of teaching is improving and standards at Key Stage 4 have risen. However, the modelling and sharing of good practice is monitored against targeted priorities inconsistently with the bias to a descriptive approach rather than robust analysis of quantitative data. Planned improvements are not sufficiently analysed at the development stage to measure their consistency and impact against the key objectives robustly.

With a higher-than-average proportion of students studying the English Baccalaureate, the broad and balanced curriculum gives clear routes for students' progression at 18 and serves them very well. The small minority of students who follow the vocational pathway benefit from the school's relationship with The Henley College. Embedded opportunities for promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are broad and particularly well supported through wide-ranging extension activities. All students study a philosophy course giving them opportunities to apply both spiritual and moral reflection in unfamiliar settings.

The school's arrangements for child protection and the safeguarding of students meet requirements. Most parents' and carers' responses to the questionnaire were positive about the school, recording that they would recommend it to others. Inspectors thoroughly investigated the concerns of the minority that were not positive and did not find evidence counter to the judgement that Gillotts is a good school.

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 Gillotts School, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1PS

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when inspectors visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, listening to your views and being part of your lessons.

We judged your school to be good. Your headteacher and other leaders are continuously improving the school for you and effectively supporting you all to maintain the very high standards you have when you join the school in Year 7. As a result, your examination results at the end of Year 11 are much higher than most students' nationally. Though you do well in all subjects, you achieve particularly well in modern foreign languages and science.

You told us that you thought the teaching in the school is usually good and that you value the detailed marking and feedback you get from teachers. However you thought that this was too variable from one teacher to another. We agree with you that the teaching you have is usually good and could see how your progress was affected by the variable quality of your teachers' assessment of your work. We thought your behaviour was good and were impressed with the way you support one another, particularly in your house and tutor groups.

We have asked the headteacher and governors to make sure that in all your lessons the work you are asked to do is matched to your capabilities and it is not the same work for everyone in the class. We have also asked them to ensure that teachers give you detailed written feedback as to how to improve when they mark your work and that your teachers support you in responding to their detailed marking. This is to support all of you to attain the very highest standards in your GCSE examinations, particularly the large proportion of you who are capable of attaining A and A* grades.

You can help your teachers by using their feedback to improve your work further.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hill
Lead inspector

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