

# Guildford County School

Farnham Road, Guildford, GU2 4LU

**Inspection dates** 12–13 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Good	2	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2	2
Leadership and management	Good	2	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Students make good progress from their starting points, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is usually good, with some outstanding lessons. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that students participate actively in lessons. Students' speaking and listening skills are excellent.
- The sixth form is good and improving rapidly. Students' rates of progress are rising.
- The headteacher and his team are sharply focused on improving teaching. As a result, teachers work closely together and share responsibility for checking each other's work.
- Good relationships between staff and students create an extremely positive environment for learning and personal growth. School leaders rightly assert that every student has been noticed and valued during the school day.
- Students' behaviour is good and often outstanding. They are courteous and confident. The school is lively and filled with energy and happy conversation.
- The school's focus on music provides excellent opportunities for students to create, perform and work together.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Some students do not make enough progress because teachers do not take sufficient account of students' abilities when planning lessons.
- Some students do not make enough progress in science.
- Some teachers do not provide enough helpful advice about what students need to do to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 43 lessons, including six joint observations with senior leaders.
- They also made a number of short visits to lessons and observed students during break time, lunchtime and at registration.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of the marking and written feedback in students' work.
- Inspectors met with groups of students across the age and ability range to discuss their views about teaching, behaviour, safety and progress.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, middle leaders, teachers and a school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors took into account the 205 responses to the online parent survey (Parent View). They considered the views of staff and the 94 responses to the staff questionnaire. The lead inspector received five letters from parents and carers and spoke to two parents or carers who wished to comment on the work of the school.
- Inspectors checked the school's safeguarding and child protection records and scrutinised the records of students' current progress. They also checked behaviour records and figures for attendance and exclusion.
- Inspectors looked at evidence of staff performance management and teachers' pay rewards over the last three years.
- Inspectors looked at the minutes of governors' meetings and a range of documents including information about teachers' professional development.

## Inspection team

Janet Pearce, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Bush	Additional Inspector
Simon Hughes	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Jones	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Guildford County School is an average-sized comprehensive school.
- The school converted to become an academy school in January 2013, keeping the same name as the predecessor school. When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school has maintained the predecessor school's specialism in music.
- The majority of students are White British, with a small number of students who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported at school action is below that found in other schools. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below that found in other schools.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is very small and well below that found in other schools. There are currently no students with parents or carers in the armed services.
- A small number of students attend alternative courses through the Guildford 11–19 Partnership, which includes Guildford College, The Willows, South-West Surrey Short Stay School, Pond Meadow Special School, George Abbot School, Howard of Effingham, Kings College, St Peter's Catholic College and Christ's College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or outstanding by:
  - ensuring that teachers plan lessons to match the ability of the students and that they are clear about what they want students to learn
  - linking teaching directly to students' targets and their current grades or levels
  - checking more frequently that teaching is making a difference to students' progress
  - taking more urgent action to improve any teaching that is less than good, particularly, but not exclusively, in science.
- Increase the rate of progress for all groups of students by ensuring that teachers provide good quality, written feedback and that students' responses to marking are followed up in a systematic way.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' rates of progress in the sixth form are rising rapidly.
- Students generally enter the school with higher than average prior attainment. Students' progress in English and mathematics compares favourably with those of students in other schools, although progress in science is not good enough.
- Students read fluently and accurately, benefiting from a well-stocked library. Students told inspectors about their choices of reading and how reading for pleasure is encouraged. Sixth form students, who are studying for the extended project qualification, say that wider reading is significantly extending their knowledge and experience.
- Students' spoken English and discussion skills are strong. They are accomplished debaters. Discussion and group work are established throughout the school and help students to learn quickly and gain confidence.
- Not all students write accurately or pay enough attention to clear presentation, accurate spelling and correct punctuation. Although there are displays about correct punctuation in classrooms, this is not systematically highlighted or checked to see if it is having a positive impact on students' writing.
- The small number of disabled students and those with special educational needs do not do as well as other students in the school. The school has rightly identified this as a key area for improvement.
- Extra support for students eligible for the pupil premium is beginning to improve their achievement and the gap between these students and others in the school which existed before January is closing.
- The wide range of alternative courses provided through the Guildford 11–19 Partnership offers selected students good opportunities to develop their practical skills and gain confidence. The school can point to specific students who have made excellent progress on these courses.
- The school does not enter any students early for examinations.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good, with some outstanding lessons. Students respect the subject knowledge of their teachers and are confident that they will get the support they need. In the best lessons, teachers take full account of students' abilities: they know exactly what they want the students to learn and they check progress frequently throughout the lesson.
- In successful lessons teachers use a creative approach to ensure that students have opportunities to think, ask questions and discuss ideas. For example, in a Year 9 music lesson students composed and performed musical accompaniments to thoughtful and poignant letters read aloud as voice-overs. Students produced highly successful fusions of sound and the written word and made excellent progress, exercising their writing and musical skills in combination.
- The best teaching makes the most of opportunities to ask searching questions. Students respond extremely well to difficult and probing questions, quoting each other and working in teams. As the headteacher says, 'This is a noisy school.' Inspectors observed that the noise is productive and shows students' energy and enthusiasm for learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and improving. In the most successful lessons, teachers combine sound subject knowledge, an appropriate focus on examination requirements and open-ended opportunities for students to work independently.
- Teaching assistants support students effectively, challenging students to work on their own, but providing extra help when necessary.
- When teaching requires improvement, it is because teachers do not take enough account of students' abilities or their rates of progress within the lesson. Some teachers are not clear about

exactly what they want students to learn or how they are going to assess their progress during the lesson. Too much attention is paid to what the teacher is going to do, rather than what the students are going to learn.

- Teachers encourage students to evaluate their own and each other's work. As a result students are reflective and supportive of each other. Teachers also provide helpful verbal feedback on students' work during lessons. However, some teachers' written comments are too hard to read and there is not enough marking that helps students to know exactly what they need to do to improve. Very few teachers routinely follow up students' responses to marking and advice.
- Teachers design homework tasks to encourage independent learning, including research and extended writing. School leaders say that students are now better at meeting deadlines and are producing work of a better standard as a result of the current homework policy.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Students' behaviour is good and often outstanding. Their attendance is good and improving. Students conduct themselves in an orderly and punctual manner within the constraints of the crowded school site. They are unfailingly courteous and helpful.
- Students are very positive about the school and their happiness and strong relationships are visible to all. One student commented, 'I love the school.' These views are echoed by the vast majority of parents and carers who are extremely positive about the care and guidance given to their children. Inspectors agree. One parent or carer described the school as having a 'really good heart' and others commented that the school had 'transformed the prospects' of their child.
- Students said that they feel safe in the school and that bullying is rare. When bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. Students have a good understanding of how to be safe and manage risk, including when they are online. They support each other well and endorse the school's strong commitment to tolerance and teamwork.
- The very few instances of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively, although some staff and parents and carers expressed concerns about consistency.
- Disruption to learning is rare, but when the teaching is less than good, students become inattentive and drift off task. A few students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning or take enough pride in their work.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher and his team demonstrate a determination to improve and develop teaching throughout the school. School leaders are realistic about the strengths and weaknesses of the school as evident in the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. They are not complacent. School leaders are committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity and know that there is more work to be done to improve the progress of all groups of students and in some subjects.
- Responsibility for checking the quality of teaching is shared throughout the school. Teachers feel valued and are provided with good quality training from senior and middle leaders. While teachers are successfully developing their craft, not enough attention is paid to the impact this has on students' progress.
- Senior leaders are not tackling students' underperformance urgently enough for the school to be outstanding. They do not collect and evaluate information about students' progress frequently enough, which means that the pace of improvement is sometimes too slow.
- The school offers a range of academic subjects at GCSE and in the sixth form, which suits most of the students very well. The school also works effectively within the Guildford 11–19 Partnership to ensure that alternative courses for some groups of students offer them a wider choice.

- Students are provided with an inspiring breadth of extra activities in music, sport, charity work and visits, which enriches their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students' involvement in music enhances all aspects of their school life and enables them to shine. For example, during the inspection, the lead inspector observed more than 150 students in the boys' choir rehearsing a stunning set of songs, demonstrating exceptional commitment, expertise and joy.
- The local authority supports the school effectively through the work of a school improvement adviser. She visits the school regularly and provides useful advice about leadership and improving teaching.
- School leaders and governors ensure that teachers have challenging targets to meet in order to progress through the teachers' pay scales. Teachers are not rewarded with pay increases unless their students do well.
- The headteacher and his senior team have accurately identified that disabled students and those with special educational needs need to make better progress. A new special educational needs coordinator is making sensible improvements to the provision for students who need extra help, including programmes to improve their reading and spelling. It is too soon to assess the impact, although early signs show that targeted students are beginning to make more progress in reading.
- School leaders have used pupil premium funding to improve the progress of eligible students. The attendance of particular students has improved as a result of the appointment of a home-school worker. Specific programmes of one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics are having a positive impact. Plans are in place to use the Year 7 catch-up premium to support students who may find moving to secondary school difficult.
- Students who are studying alternative courses are monitored for their attendance. However, school leaders have not checked the academic progress of students on alternative courses carefully enough. Health and safety arrangements for these students meet all statutory requirements.
- Safeguarding arrangements for the school as a whole meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and ask challenging questions about results and the quality of teaching. They ensure that changes in policy do not happen without checking thoroughly that any new approach is the right one. Governors then ensure that initiatives are evaluated carefully. For example, governors are taking a keen interest in the way the school organises groups of students according to ability in order to make sure that this benefits students. Governors have a sound grasp of current measures of attainment and progress. They are involved in the day-to-day work of the school, including visits to lessons. They attend regular training and are determined to push the school to become outstanding. Governors set the headteacher challenging targets and are fully involved in the management of teachers' performance. They have worked hard to ensure better communication between the school and parents and carers, as evident in the growing group of parents and carers who attend the parent focus group. Governors know they are responsible for ensuring that the pupil premium funding is spent wisely and used to improve the results of those pupils eligible for extra support. Governors have guided school leaders effectively through a time of reduced finances and constraints on spending.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139193
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	418369

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,018
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	216
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Janette Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Costello
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01483 504089
<b>Fax number</b>	01483 300849
<b>Email address</b>	pcostello@guildfordcounty.surrey.sch.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

