



The Tiffin Girls' School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 102602
LEA Kingston Upon Thames LEA
Inspection number 276744
Inspection dates 29 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Anne Feltham HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Richmond Road
School category	Community		Kingston Upon Thames
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		KT2 5PL
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	02085460773
Number on roll	886	Fax number	02085470191
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Sandra Holdsworth
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2000	Headteacher	Pauline Cox

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Tiffin Girls' School in Kingston upon Thames is a selective grammar school for girls, drawing pupils from a very wide area beyond the borough. Its sixth form is relatively large, with about a quarter of the school's pupils. Some activities, including general studies sessions, are held jointly with sixth form students from the local boys' grammar school. Around half the pupils in the school are from minority ethnic communities, and around one third are bilingual. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average and very few pupils have disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Tiffin Girls' School provides a very effective education for its pupils and the learning environment is caring, orderly and supportive. Behaviour and attendance are outstanding. Pupils enjoy being at school and readily seize opportunities to contribute to the school and the wider community. Sporting opportunities, focused personal, social and health education sessions for every year group and an excellent canteen all encourage pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The care and support offered to pupils are good, and the school is currently identifying even better ways of seeking pupils' views and responding to them more efficiently. Pupils enter the school with high levels of attainment and they make good progress through the school. Standards are consistently high across all subjects, with achievement in subjects such as mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) truly outstanding. Progress in English in recent years has been more variable, but the school is beginning to address this effectively. Teaching is good, with some excellent features: teachers know their subjects very well, share their enthusiasm with their pupils and create excellent working relationships. Classrooms have very good ICT resources and most teachers use these skilfully to support learning. Teachers are currently focusing well on how to improve their own skills, and those of their pupils, in assessing and analysing performance. Good work is underway to support advanced bilingual pupils more effectively. Despite the school's many successes, its leaders continue to pursue 'a relentless quest for improvement' and inspectors concur fully with this view. The headteacher provides an outstanding model for staff and pupils, knows her school very well and evaluates it accurately. Substantial fire damage to the school in late 2003 particularly affected the work of three faculties; very well targeted subsequent management action has supported pupils' learning during difficult times. The school has improved since the last inspection, provides very good value for money and demonstrates a clear capacity to improve. Specialist school status has been developed very well both to strengthen targeted curriculum areas, and to benefit the school and its community more widely.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is highly effective and very efficient. Pass rates and retention on both GCE advanced and advance subsidiary level (A and AS level) courses are very high. Pupils are highly committed, learn well and make good progress. Teaching is good, with some outstanding work undertaken. Amongst successes in many curriculum areas, the large numbers of pupils achieving the highest grades in mathematics each year is, in particular, outstanding. Pupils are well cared for in the sixth form, with a dedicated team of tutors who receive specialist training for the role. Preparation for university entrance is of very high quality. Sixth form students enjoy a wide range of opportunities to adopt leadership roles: these include formal responsibilities involving younger pupils and opportunities to undertake social, political, religious and charitable initiatives throughout the wider school community.

What the school should do to improve further

This very successful school pursues improvement relentlessly, and should focus now on developing further three initiatives currently underway, namely: * ensuring that pupils understand how their work is assessed and what they have to do to improve it* establishing further ways of finding out from pupils - and their parents - how to make the school even better * analysing bilingual pupils' linguistic profiles, establishing their advanced learning needs and monitoring their progress in all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards in the school are consistently very high. The school is selective and the attainment of pupils when they start Year 7 is significantly above average. Pupils generally make good progress in the school. Results at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently well above average. GCSE results consistently match or exceed the results of similar schools. In 2005, the school was the second highest performing state school in the country at GCSE level. All students gain A* to C grade passes and, in most subjects, over 80% of students gain A* or A grades. Pupils' achievement in English has been variable in recent years, with a marked drop in 2004, although GCSE results improved in 2005. Attainment and progress in mathematics are consistently outstanding at all levels. The performance of students at GCE A level is of a very high standard. Consistently, over 80% of students gain A or B grades in all their subjects. In 2005, nearly 90% of students gained A or B grades, results which are well above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Exemplary attitudes to learning, very good attendance and considerate behaviour help pupils to reach very high academic levels. They listen to each other and work well in groups, sometimes clapping spontaneously when other pupils perform well. Pupils are proud of their school's success and of its supportive, racially harmonious community. A senior pupil summed this up: 'No bullying is allowed, that's drummed into you from the beginning'. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The house system, with sixth form students taking a leading role, adds a competitive edge to fundraising and sports, promoting teamwork and friendly competition. The school is aware of the limitations of the school council, and so senior pupils are beginning to work as 'student researchers' to give younger pupils a more effective voice. Pupils understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. School food is excellent and pupils make wise choices. There are many diverse opportunities for sports and musical activities. Pupils take part in mini-enterprise and young enterprise to learn about the business world. Sixth form students are responsible for vibrant initiatives such as developing a commitment to fair trade. However, younger pupils would benefit from more opportunities to contribute to the community. The school fosters the development of mature and reflective young women.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan activities which engage pupils' interest and encourage them to be creative and think independently. Lively starter activities are a strong feature of the best lessons. Most teachers use the school's very good ICT resources skilfully and encourage pupils to increase their own proficiency with a range of ICT resources to improve their work. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and this contributes to the positive working atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers move lessons at a lively pace and challenge pupils well. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly, usually setting work to suit different pupils, but they do not always take sufficient account of advanced bilingual pupils' language needs. The school has identified this issue and is rightly addressing it through a whole-school training programme. Homework is set and marked regularly, with many teachers giving helpful written feedback. Pupils are set learning targets in their different subjects. In the best lessons they are encouraged to assess their own learning, evaluate the quality of other pupils' work and help each other improve. Although all teachers test pupils' learning regularly and thoroughly, pupils are not always sufficiently involved in the assessment process. Inspectors agree with the school that teaching in the sixth form is also of good quality overall, with some very lively and stimulating teaching. In the best lessons teachers challenge their pupils very well and give them exciting opportunities to explore ideas in pairs and groups, as well as through whole-class discussion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school curriculum provides pupils with outstanding opportunities, allowing them to follow courses which match their needs. The national Key Stage 3 curriculum is successfully covered and the four 14-19 fast-track courses benefit pupils in planning their career path. There is very good careers support throughout the school. Sixth form students have a good choice of academic courses and a programme of general studies which includes religious education. Many extra-curricular activities are offered and sixth form students participate in community-based projects. All Year 11 pupils undertake well-planned work experience. Specialist school status has made a significant impact on pupils' learning opportunities. Teachers and pupils make very good use of ICT in lessons and pupils use the technology widely for research-based learning. Pupils have access to the computer network throughout and beyond the school day and, despite the fire damage to the network, the school has continued to provide full computer access for all pupils. Challenging targets for the number of pupils taking ICT, computing and mathematics courses have been met. The school has worked with partner schools by providing mathematics master classes for Year 6 pupils and through developing an ICT training programme for primary teachers and teaching assistants. Courses have also been successfully provided for the wider community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a stimulating, safe environment that motivates pupils. Induction is good and pupils at risk are identified early. Pupils value the support and commitment given by tutors and heads of year, and vulnerable girls are well supported. Good records are kept and shared electronically. Child protection procedures are satisfactory, and records are confidential. The school is rightly seeking ways to improve consultation with parents and pupils to guide school practice. Teachers monitor pupils' progress well, and are beginning to monitor the achievement of bilingual pupils as groups. The very few pupils with special educational needs are well supported by the school, with good links to outside agencies and some effective individual education plans. Sixth form students are very well prepared for university entrance and their pastoral care is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. She works closely with the senior team to run the school very effectively, aware of the need to seek the views of parents and pupils. The transforming learning project is enabling pupils to provide feedback on ways in which lessons might be improved to help them learn better. Teachers use data well for planning, but they need to look more closely at the performance of different groups of pupils. Overall, school leaders have a very good knowledge of the school's weaknesses, which they are tackling well, for example by improving pupil's progress in aspects of English. Although the school made great efforts to maintain effective teaching and learning in the aftermath of the 2003 fire, the work of some subject departments, such as English and languages, was particularly affected. The performance management of teachers works well overall, but the quality of the targets set is variable. Teachers and subject faculties now have innovative opportunities through the sharing good practice group to learn from each other; this initiative has the potential to improve the good quality of teaching still further. The sixth form is very well led and managed. A recent successful initiative has focused on training all tutors to give specialist support on higher education and careers. The school development plan addresses all aspects of the work of the school and supports improvement very well. The governing body is committed and effective. The school seeks actively to ensure that governors represent all groups within the school's diverse community. The governors are seeking to develop still further their understanding of how the school supports specific groups of learners. Mathematics and computing specialist status is having a very positive impact on provision and is helping the school develop its wider links with the community. Resources are used very effectively. The school provides very good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

* We think that your school is an outstanding one, where teachers provide good care and support to help you learn well, make good progress and be healthy. The school offers you a wide range of opportunities to prepare you well for adult life and is developing ways of giving you and your parents a greater say in decisions.* Your behaviour and your keenness to learn are excellent, and this leads to very high examination results. The atmosphere in the school is a very harmonious one where pupils from many different backgrounds help each other to learn. We agree with the pupil who said 'No bullying is allowed. That's drummed into you from the beginning'.

In order to become even better your school needs to continue to:* involve you more in assessing and improving your work* find out what you and your parents think about how to improve the school still further* help those of you who already know other languages to develop your linguistic skills even further.Thank you for taking part in the inspection, by talking to us about your work and your life in school. We were very impressed by your mature and reflective views.