



The FitzWimarc School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115338
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279579
Inspection dates 14 June 2006 to 15 June 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Lindsay Hebditch HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hockley Road
School category	Foundation		SS6 8EB
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01268 743884
Number on roll	1333	Fax number	01268 742877
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.A Ellis
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr. James Fuller

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	14 June 2006 - 15 June 2006	279579

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The FitzWimarc School is a popular, large mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16. It has 1333 students drawn from the community of Rayleigh where unemployment and deprivation are low. Fewer than one student in twenty is known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. Some 6% of students are from ethnic minority groups. This figure is below both the Essex and national averages. The proportion of students who have reached the expected standard when they join the school in Year 7 is close to the national average. The number of students who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low but an increasing proportion of these have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The school achieved Specialist Language College status in September 2000 and was redesignated in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the school is very good. It is a safe, happy school that cares exceptionally well for every student. The school is making good progress because of the strong commitment of the headteacher, governors and teachers to raising standards. The headteacher understands well what the strengths and weaknesses of the school are and what it needs to do to improve provision further. Plans are in place to develop the capacity of senior teachers to participate in addressing the school's strategic priorities. The school is accurate in its own evaluation of the quality of provision and its effectiveness. All students, including those who require extra help with their learning, make good progress. The school has maintained pass rates at GCSE which are well above the national average in each year since the last inspection. The number of students who achieve five GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics is high. The overall quality of teaching is good but does not always capture the imagination of students. The arrangements for providing cover for teachers who are absent are not always effective. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent. Students have positive attitudes and attend regularly. The curriculum provides a good range of activities, including an excellent range of enrichment. The school has yet to develop fully its range of vocational courses and its provision for enterprise education. Improvements since the last inspection have been effective and the school has good capacity to make further improvements. It provides good value for money. Most parents are very pleased with the education which the school provides and the standards it achieves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the capacity of senior teachers to participate in addressing the school's strategic priorities. - Further develop the range of vocational courses to meet the needs of all students in Key Stage 4. - Improve the arrangements for providing cover for teachers who are absent.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. This confirms the school's judgements. Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. By the end of Key Stage 3 they have made good progress in English, mathematics and science and attain above average standards. Students make good progress at Key Stage 4. Challenging targets were met in 2005. The school has maintained GCSE pass rates at grades A*-C which are well above the national average in each year since the last inspection and the proportion of students who achieve five GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics is high and above average. Students do well in most subjects, although in 2005 GCSE results in French and Spanish were lower than expected. Generally, standards in languages are sound. More able pupils are well challenged and a significant proportion attain A* and A grades in GCSEs. The standards of boys have improved

significantly during the last three years, are now well above average and are comparable with the high standards achieved by girls. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well. Students and parents are pleased with standards in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Their behaviour, both in lessons and around school, is excellent. Attendance is well above the national average. Students have very positive attitudes to learning, and take much pride in their school. There is an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs which are very well used by students. Sports clubs are open to all and most students attend them regularly. This encourages the personal and social development of students and accounts for the considerable success that school teams achieve. There are very good opportunities in all years for students to take responsibility and show initiative. During Charity Week, students develop imaginative ways of raising funds, and the large donations they make to local and national charities demonstrate how successful they are. The School Council provides strong representation of student views, although some parents and students feel that it should be allowed to implement its decisions more quickly. The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is excellent and good use is made of the local and wider environment to promote multicultural issues and to prepare students thoroughly and effectively for their future economic well-being. The outstanding International Industry Day for Year 7 students promotes an understanding of the business world and encourages a greater knowledge of different countries, peoples and cultures. Students appreciate the need for a healthy and safe lifestyle well and many say they value the healthy options offered by the canteen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. The judgements that senior managers make of the quality of lessons is accurate, which was demonstrated when they joined inspectors for the observation of two lessons. The positive ethos of the school prepares students well for learning and enables teachers to get straight on with the job of teaching. Teachers know their subjects well and enjoy good relationships with students. Most lessons are effective because the level of challenge ensures that students make good progress. Behaviour is outstanding, enabling all lessons to proceed without interruption and ensures learning continues to the bell. In the best lessons planning is thorough and the variety of tasks ensures that all students have the opportunity to make good progress. Clear learning objectives are shared with the students and careful questioning provides good opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding. In the few less effective lessons, teaching and learning strategies are too narrow and fail to capture the

imagination of students. Additionally they are planned too rigidly so that students cannot move at their own pace and take responsibility for their learning. Assessment for learning is a particularly effective development since the last inspection. Marking of work is thorough, with a good balance of praise, helpful advice and an assessment of how well the student is doing compared to national standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. In the first three years students follow a broad programme that includes effective experience of modern foreign languages, meeting the requirements of the school's specialist Language College status. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 meets all statutory requirements and provides a good range of optional subjects. The school has recently reviewed its curriculum and has correctly identified the need to widen the curriculum to provide opportunities for students of all abilities in both academic and vocational areas. It has therefore begun to develop vocational courses and intends to widen this provision in future. Throughout the school, students benefit from the excellent opportunities they have to participate in sports. Social and cultural events also add to the enjoyment of coming to school. There is a very good range of day and extended visits that widen experience, particularly those linked to the school's specialist language status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Inspectors agreed with the school's evaluation that care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. The pastoral system is strong and students' academic progress is monitored carefully and effectively. Relationships between staff and students are excellent, and students are confident that they can find an adult to talk to when needed. Procedures for ensuring students' safety and well-being are secure. Students feel safe at school. Child protection arrangements are firmly in place and risk assessments are carefully managed. Very effective links have been established with outside agencies, including counselling services to support vulnerable students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully included in all aspects of school life and receive excellent support. Individual education plans, which were a weakness at the last inspection, are now a significant strength, and the careful monitoring of these plans, together with the excellent additional support available, have led to the very good progress that these students make. Guidance on careers and progression to further education is excellent and contributes to the very high number of students who continue their education post-16.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership for the school. Parents, teachers and governors respect and share his

dedication to promoting high standards of behaviour and achievement for all students. Self-assessment is thorough and accurate. It is used very well to identify key areas for development. Through this process the school identified the need to develop the capacity of senior teachers to participate in addressing the school's strategic priorities and has begun to take appropriate action. Planning procedures in the school are good. The priorities in the school improvement plan form the basis of the subject action plans. There are comprehensive reviews of the progress which is being made against the targets contained in the plans throughout the year. Middle management is strong and ensures that school policies are implemented consistently in all departments. Teachers are well qualified and experienced but the arrangements to cover for their absence are not always effective. There is a very good programme of professional development and all members of staff including the headteacher and members of the senior team undertake training in order to improve standards further. Lesson observation is well-established and there is a clear emphasis on improving the standard of teaching and learning throughout the school. Support staff are valued and well integrated into school life. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement and provide well-considered support, although their precise role in monitoring the school improvement plan needs further clarification. The school's financial management is secure and value for money is good. The school has addressed most of the issues in the last inspection and has good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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'd like to tell you what our inspectors thought of your school when we visited it earlier this week. We met and talked to quite a few of you during our two days at the school. We watched some of your lessons and looked at the quality of your work. We were also pleased that so many of your parents wrote to us to tell us what they thought about the school. We think that The FitzWimarc School is a very good school that is improving all the time. Your headteacher and governors manage the school effectively. We think that it is a safe and happy place which cares exceptionally well for all of you. We were pleased to see outstanding behaviour around the school and in lessons. We saw some very interesting lessons and thought, like you, that teachers really help you to do your best. You told us how much support they give, both during and outside of lessons. This is reflected in the good examination results you achieve. You have very good opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, languages and charity work. We were very impressed with the 'International Day', which took place while we were at the school. We identified three things that the school could do to help it improve further. These were: - develop further the capacity of senior teachers to participate in addressing the school's strategic priorities - further develop the range of vocational courses to meet the needs of all students in Key Stage 4 - improve the arrangements for providing cover for teachers who are absent Keep up the good work, and thanks for your help.