



Furze Platt Senior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110066
Local Authority Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number 288579
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Furze Platt Road
School category	Community		Maidenhead
Age range of pupils	11–18		SL6 7NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01628 625308
Number on roll (school)	1101	Fax number	01628 782257
Number on roll (6th form)	167		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs S P Le Page
		Headteacher	Ms T S White
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	6–7 February 2007	288579

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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

Furze Platt Senior School is an average sized comprehensive school serving the town of Maidenhead and surrounding area.

Although the percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average, the proportion of students with a statement of educational needs is higher as the school hosts the local authority centre for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (AURA). The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with national average. The school acquired specialist status in mathematics and computing in 2004 and is part of the Maidenhead federation of five local secondary schools and a special school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Furze Platt Senior School is an improving school with very good capacity to improve further. It provides a satisfactory level of education with many good features. Students enjoy coming to school and are well cared for. As one Year 11 student wrote 'I write to you today, not because I feel I should or because I have been asked to but because I want to explain to you why I love attending and why I am proud to belong to Furze Platt Senior School'. The school has a good reputation in the local area and is heavily oversubscribed. The vast majority of parents have a positive view of the school and a striking number of parents wrote to express how happy their children are at school.

The school provides a wide variety of activities ranging from sporting clubs to drama productions, and after school activities are very well supported. Students feel that they are well consulted and the school council has been instrumental in bringing about a range of changes, including the development and implementation of a teacher-student 'Learning Contract' and healthy meals options in the school canteen.

Students make satisfactory progress and attainment at both the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is above the national average. In the last two years the school has had a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and in 2006, results in national tests in Year 11 rose after a period of decline. However, a significant number of students did not achieve as well as expected particularly when compared to students in similar schools. Changes to provision and focused tracking of students' progress are beginning to lead to increased levels of achievement.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving due to the implementation of the 'Learning Contract', which sets out what both students and teachers need to do to make learning successful. The school recognises that more needs to be done to enhance the quality of teaching further, and there is a clear focus on teaching and learning through classroom monitoring and staff training. Although students know their targets in most subjects, some teachers do not give sufficient guidance to students on how they might improve their work in order to achieve further progress. The behaviour of the students is generally good and students say that this has improved over the last year. However, some parents express concern about poor behaviour in some classes. The school rightly identifies the need to maintain a focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to bring all lessons to the standard of the best.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the students well. Students in Key Stage 3 benefit from a 'Learning to Learn' course. Good partnerships with external organisations allow a range of vocational provision that particularly benefits some of the lower attaining students at Key Stage 4. The school's resource for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (AURA) is outstanding. The school makes good use of its specialist status in mathematics to improve the standards achieved by students and the quality of teaching and learning. Good support has been provided to partner institutions especially local primary schools. The ICT infrastructure has been substantially improved and good training is provided for all staff. Since the appointment

of the new head of ICT these improvements are beginning to impact on standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

The incisive head and the leadership team have a clear vision for the school. This is shared by all staff and governors. School self-evaluation at all levels is both rigorous and accurate, as shown by students' improving progress. At all levels of leadership there is a clear focus on raising the level of achievement of all students. Leadership of departments is good and pastoral leaders are developing their role in monitoring progress. Governors hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and have been actively supportive of both the senior leadership team and school as they journey to effect improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory curriculum based on a wide range of AS and A2 courses and a lower level (Level 2) programme accredited through National Diplomas in Business and IT with some GCSEs. The attainment of students on the AS and A2 programme is consistently above the national average and represents good achievement for these students. The Level 2 programme was only recently introduced to satisfy the needs and aspirations of students who did not gain the necessary GCSE qualifications to enter the AS and A2 provision. The purpose of this programme and accreditation and progression routes from it are not clearly enough defined. The progress which students make on this course has improved and is now satisfactory. Consequently, students' achievements in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. The school has invested much time and effort in identifying the most effective learning styles for students and using this information to provide training for staff to improve their practice. These developments were fully implemented in September 2006 and are having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning which are satisfactory overall, and better at A and A2 than at Level 2. Teachers are highly qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects and a particular strength in teaching is the excellent relationships that are developed between student and teacher. The care and support provided for all students in the sixth form is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress that all students make in their time in school.
- Clarify the role of Level 2 programmes in the overall sixth form provision.
- Strengthen the impact of the 'Learning Contract' to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching.[r2]

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students start Year 7 with standards that are slightly above average. They make satisfactory progress through the first three years and results in the national tests at

the end of Year 9 are above average. In particular students do very well at the higher levels in mathematics.

The percentage of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades increased significantly in 2006 after three years of declining results. It is now above the national average and the percentage of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades including mathematics and English is well above the national average. In general students make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11 although, in 2006, a significant proportion of students did not make the expected progress. This was mostly due to historical curriculum organisation and provision for a significant group of students that caused disaffection. Results in the core subjects of mathematics, English and science are good; however there is some variation in the performance of other subjects. In technology, pupils make less progress than they might be expected to. This department is receiving targeted support and training.

In lessons, most students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and from ethnic minorities, make at least satisfactory progress. The school expects to meet its academic targets this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is good. This is reflected in their enjoyment of school, good behaviour and regular attendance. A large number of parents say their children are happy at Furze Platt Senior. As one parent put it, 'There is a problem when he is ill because he wants to go to school'. Students feel safe and the rare incidents of bullying are taken seriously. Most students show respect for one another and their teachers. They are thoughtful, considerate and loyal. Students' social, moral and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory. Through the school council and other voluntary activities students contribute very well to school life. By acting as mentors, sixth form students provide good help to younger students in the paired reading and mathematics programmes. These contribute well to students' developing understanding of responsible citizenship. Students also make a good contribution to the community, especially through the School Sports Co-ordinator Programme, whereby they act as coaches and referees at the annual junior school 'mini-olympics'. The school is preparing for the Healthy School Award and students are successfully encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The emphasis on physical activity and the healthy meal options that are available at lunchtimes effectively contribute to this. There is a large amount of litter around the school. Students are not sufficiently aware of energy saving initiatives and, for example, leave outside doors open too readily.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The amount of good teaching has increased in the last eighteen months, contributing to the improved results in 2006. The school has involved students in creating a 'Learning Contract' which has successfully led to both themselves and teachers agreeing on what they must do to make learning successful. Teachers now share good practice and welcome the school's training and support. This is a recent development and students still experience some lessons which are mundane and lacking active engagement.

In the most successful lessons, teachers link work to students' own experiences and show them how it is relevant to their lives. In the great majority of lessons teachers have very good relationships with students and learning proceeds at a good pace. Students notice and appreciate that teachers are enthusiastic as well as knowledgeable about their subjects. Teachers are aware of the importance of wording questions carefully and giving students time to answer. Some do this very well, for example urging students to take an answer 'one step further' to deepen thinking. However, not enough teachers do so.

English teachers mark students' written work extremely well with helpful comments about how to improve. Such good practice is less evident in other subjects. Senior managers know that there are still variations in the quality of teaching and learning within and between subjects and continue to prioritise a whole school focus on teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is good and has been redesigned in the last two years in order to reduce disaffection amongst some students. In Years 7 to 9 a programme has been introduced to develop students' study skills. This is proving to be successful. Those students needing literacy support have useful additional lessons in place of one of their modern foreign language lessons. Higher attaining students can choose to study a second language in Year 8 and separate sciences at GCSE. Less able students study applied science or a single science and have a choice from a number of vocational courses in school and/or work related courses at the local college. However, courses related to these subjects are not offered in the sixth form.

Reflecting the school's specialism, many students take GCSE mathematics before the end of Year 11 and then study either GCSE statistics or AS mathematics in Year 11. All students study an ICT course. Students' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are well developed and their preparation for the world of work is good.

In addition to all of the above, the school offers students a huge range of extra-curricular experiences. Students enjoy these and appreciate being involved in dance performances and music and drama productions, as well as a large number of sports. Trips abroad and educational day visits are regular, worthwhile events. This adds to students' enjoyment and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support for students are good. Arrangements for child protection work well and careful attention is paid to health and safety. Incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pastoral support for students is strong and tutors are increasingly involved in the monitoring of academic progress. While students know their subject levels, they are not clear in all subjects precisely what they have to do to improve. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and the gifted and talented, are well supported, as are students in the early stages of learning English. Parents and carers are kept well informed of their children's progress and links with external agencies are strong.

Data about students' progress and standards are analysed well and presented in a way that teachers can use to set targets and monitor how well students are doing. This helps identify students who might be underachieving, allowing targeted support to be put in place to get them back on track. Some of this work is exemplary and has helped several Year 11 students to change their attitudes to learning.

Students receive good advice and guidance on which subjects to choose for GCSE. Career discussions about sixth form courses are too often restricted to academic options.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership of the school at all levels is characterised by a shared vision, commitment and drive to raise the achievements of all students. The head, together with the dedicated senior leadership team, have a clear and honest understanding of what has been achieved in recent years. They have led the way to a common sense of purpose in the staff on the key priorities for improvement. All aspects of school performance and its work are clearly monitored and evaluation is accurate. The school's development plan focuses on key priorities particularly with regard to improving teaching and learning and improving behaviour. It provides a very good framework for improvement. Departmental action plans are derived from the whole school priorities and rigorous and high quality departmental self-evaluation. Departments are clearly monitored and accountable to senior management and a regular programme of departmental reviews leads to timely actions that are leading to improvement. Many initiatives are already

having an impact on students' progress as demonstrated by the school's internal data tracking systems.

The management of the sixth form on a day-to-day basis is good. However, there is a lack of clarity and direction about where the Level 2 programme fits within the sixth form provision. The school has not recognised this clearly enough. Consequently, the overall leadership and management and capacity to improve in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are very well informed and provide good support for the school.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

We think Furze Platt Senior School provides you with a satisfactory level of education. It has many good features and the potential to improve even further.

A strength of the school is the relationships that you have with one another and members of staff. Your attitudes and behaviour both in lessons and around the school are very good. We feel you are well looked after and given good support and guidance in making decisions about the future. The curriculum you are offered is broad and there is a wide range of other opportunities from extra-curricular clubs to exciting trips to extend your learning. You told us that many of you enjoy the responsibilities that you have been given, for example being a member of the school council, a student mentor or working on paired reading with younger students.

We were impressed with your involvement in the development of the 'Learning Contract' and it was good to see it displayed in all classrooms. We are asking your teachers to continue to develop the impact of this in order to enable them to help all of you to maximise the progress you make during your time in school. We hope that you will take an active part in fulfilling your part of the contract. We have also asked the school management to consider the range of provision for students of all abilities in the sixth form.

We noticed while we were at the school that there was a lot of litter around the site and that energy was wasted by leaving outside doors open and we would encourage you to take greater care of your environment.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to getting things right for you and we are sure you will continue to support them in this. Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to your school so enjoyable. We hope that your production of *The Wizz* was successful.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector