

Yateley School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 116433 |
| Local Authority | Hampshire |
| Inspection number | 290533 |
| Inspection dates | 6–7 February 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Peter Gale HMI |

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

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|---|------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 1501 |
| 6th form | 220 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr M Baker |
| Headteacher | Mr W R Sarell |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 December 2002 |
| School address | School Lane Yateley GU46 6NW |
| Telephone number | 01252 879222 |
| Fax number | 01252 872517 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|
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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

This is a larger than average school with a long established status as a specialist performing arts college. The school is part of the Yateley campus providing pre-school to adult education. Most students are from a White British background and there are very few whose first language is not English. The percentage of students who are eligible for free school meals is low. Although the percentage of students with statements of special educational need is low, the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Yateley is a good school. It provides good quality care, education, and satisfactory but improving leadership. The specialist status in performing arts adds real value to the work of the school, particularly in terms of personal development. One parent commented that there is a 'wonderful sense of encouragement and teamwork for the numerous productions'. Standards are above average on entry and also at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4. In the past the school had not recognized that some individual students were not making the progress of which they were capable. The school has begun to respond to underperformance and this led to strong improvements in the rate of progress students made in Key Stage 4 in 2007 and a rise in standards. Whilst this had a positive impact on Key Stage 4, progress was not good enough in Key Stage 3 last year. The school has focused more effort on Key Stage 3 teaching and learning since September. Progress is now satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good when measured across both key stages due to the stronger performance in Key Stage 4.

There is a drive from the senior leadership to accelerate progress although this is inconsistently reflected in leadership at all levels. Teaching and learning are best during Key Stage 4. In some Key Stage 3 lessons, teaching styles are insufficiently adapted to the needs of younger students, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Overall, teaching and learning are good and this leads to good progress. There is a small minority of teaching across the school where planning and execution fail to meet the full range of needs of the students and this is more prevalent in Key Stage 3 where timetabling constraints require more mixed ability teaching. Although, the school is aware of the problem it has not been totally successful in eradicating this by sharing the very good practice that exists. Behaviour is good in most lessons and around the school although a minority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed concerns around this important area.

The curriculum reflects the school's specialist status well and is suitably adapted in Key Stage 4 to meet the needs of all learners with academic and vocational routes for learners. Extra curricular provision is a particular strength and both excites the able and supports the more vulnerable through the work of dedicated staff. Students show a good awareness of how to lead safe, healthy lifestyles and are fully involved in the local community and in the numerous extra-curricular activities. Care, guidance and support are good in the school with the exception of marking which often fails to inform students how best to improve. The mentoring system to support students who underachieve has helped them both pastorally and academically.

The headteacher, leadership team and other leaders in the school are developing a clear sense of priorities to improve the school. As a result, the school is implementing targeted strategies to realise these priorities. Some strategies, such as improving GCSE results by targeting underachieving individuals are already successful but need further embedding. Others, such as developing a greater consistency of learning experience for students across and within subjects remain areas requiring further development. Individual student targets are challenging, well reviewed, and tracked to help students improve. However, whole school and departmental targets are less challenging. School improvement planning is not sharply enough focused on raising student achievement.

Since the last inspection most of the issues for improvement have been successfully addressed. The issues relating to the need to share very best teaching practice and improve the behaviour in some satisfactory lessons remain and are intrinsically linked. The school is improving its

financial position and has begun to implement its successful Key Stage 4 strategies in Key Stage 3. In light of recent successes, coupled with a talented staff and an able school population, the school demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good. It is led and managed in a demanding, yet sensitive, way. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are broadly average and historically they have left with grades that were in line with national average results. The rigorous and thorough assessment procedures introduced by the recently appointed head of sixth form are contributing to improving standards; for present students, though prior attainment is broadly average, standards are above average. Good teaching and a relevant curriculum, which meets the students' needs well, leads to good achievement. The curriculum is enhanced by an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, many of which are offered as part of the school's specialist status as a performing arts college. Though there is a spread of vocational subjects, some aspects of work-related learning have not been fully exploited by developing external links. Many students contribute well to school life and the wider community by helping with charitable projects for example.

Effective monitoring has led to improved attendance and this is now good. Course retention rates are good. Most students are responding positively to the recently introduced changes; they enjoy the sixth form and are appreciative of the care, support and challenges provided. Parental support is strong. As one parent commented: 'The sixth form is improving. It is now strongly led. The head of sixth form has brought a new ethos of commitment to study and achievement and I am very impressed with the support offered to my daughter.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Spread the good practice seen in the majority of teaching and learning particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Drive up standards by raising expectations of student progress through departmental and whole school improvement planning particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Develop marking to better guide students on how to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards at Key Stage 3 and 4 in 2007 were above average with the exception of science at Key Stage 3 where they were average. Achievement was good during Key Stage 4 due to effective teaching and learning and a concerted whole school approach to raise GCSE performance. The school has correctly focused its energies into improvement at Key Stage 4 and some strategies have been very effective especially mentoring of underachievers and those with behavioural issues. This has led to especially good progress by the less able and those with learning difficulties and or disabilities at Key Stage 4

Key Stage 3 results in 2007 were a complete contrast to Key Stage 4 with those that were less able and those with learning difficulties and or disabilities making the least progress. The school has begun to address Key Stage 3 achievement by careful analysis and the use of local authority advisors to support subject leaders. External observations of teaching and subsequent support

for curriculum and teacher development are beginning to result in a better teaching and learning experience for students. Monitoring and tracking have improved, though more intervention and embedding are required to increase the impact on levels of attainment. Tracking information indicates that the progress of current Key Stage 3 students is at least satisfactory. Students in Key Stage 4 continue to make at least good progress, partly because the teaching and learning are better. Overall, the progress students make across both key stages is now good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students are enthusiastic about coming to school, they enjoy learning and attendance levels are above the national average. Behaviour round the school and in lessons is good. Students feel that they are dealt with fairly and supported well. Attitudes are very positive in lessons such as art and music, where students are encouraged to be creative and share their work with others.

Opportunities available because of the performing arts status have benefited students and participation in school productions is very good as is attendance at clubs and after school activities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall with cultural development being particularly strong. Knowledge of other faiths and cultures is good and the school now puts a specific emphasis on the culture of its own minority groups. Students show good understanding of health and environmental issues and of how to be safe in a school or working environment. Participation in sport is good but not all students make wise choices about eating judging by litter evident around the campus.

The school council is effective and students make a good contribution to their school and to the wider community via charity fund raising and by acting as assistants in classes and in the library. Students have secure academic and practical skills and they are aware of the requirements of the workplace, which prepares them well for future economic wellbeing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is best at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In the vast majority of lessons, students are attentive and teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and well developed teaching skills. In these lessons students progress at a good rate.

Although there is evidence of much good and even outstanding teaching in a wide variety of subjects at all levels this is not sufficiently consistent across or within subject areas. Lesson plans are generally used well to aid teaching, though greater emphasis is needed to identify and share with students what they should have learned by the end of the lesson. In a small minority of lessons, particularly in Key Stage 3, teaching is less effectively matched to learners' needs. In these lessons, interest levels and pace are low and result in low-level behaviour issues from some students. In turn, this disrupts teaching and so affects both student motivation and progress. Homework is not consistently well used to inform both teachers and students on

individual progress. Classroom assistants are well briefed and work well with class teachers and provide a valuable contribution to the progress of targeted students and others.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

A good range of both academic and vocational subject choices are available to students which meets their needs and aspirations well. From Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is enriched with the study of dance and drama. Developments are taking place to enhance the Key Stage 3 curriculum in science and mathematics through more enquiry and problem solving. In Years 8 and 9, Latin and Spanish can also be experienced. At Key Stage 4, various pathways exist, enabling students to obtain either vocational or academic qualifications or combinations of these. Apart from those students taking GCSE in information studies, there are only limited opportunities for students to further develop their information, communications and technology skills (ICT) in Year 11. The needs of both less able students and those with lower levels of motivation are fully considered in providing suitable school and college linked courses leading to recognised qualifications. A wide range of curriculum enrichment and subject enhancement opportunities are available to further challenge students. The more able have the opportunity to undertake additional GCSE courses and also study some AS modules in Year 11. Students are suitably prepared for life beyond school, having been taught a variety of essential life skills including health education, financial skills, citizenship and careers guidance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care and guidance is good and requirements for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare are met. Careful monitoring of attendance data takes place but students are not always registered in subject lessons as required by the school and procedures for informing parents about students' failure to arrive in school need to be more clearly established. Provision for vulnerable students and individuals with specific needs is good and there has been a recent review of individual education planning. There is provision for gifted and talented students but planning does not always challenge those of high academic ability. The pastoral system is effective and there are good systems for supporting students through the house system. The quality of medical and other support is good as is provision for careers advice and guidance. The new PSHE programme is helping students in making appropriate lifestyle and other choices. Academic guidance is effective and older students do know how well they are doing and what they need to improve. There are inconsistencies in marking and, teacher comments whilst encouraging, often fail to guide students about how to improve. Students are given good advice and guidance on subject and course options in Years 9 and 11 so that they are confident about making informed choices about courses at GCSE and in the sixth form or at other centres.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and school leadership have recently focused more clearly on improving student progress as external comparative data has become available. The Governors have in turn begun to hold the senior management team to account more effectively using this data. Effective self-evaluation has identified weaknesses and recently great strides have been taken to overcome them. The results of these efforts have been a rapid improvement in Key Stage 4 through strategies to support and guide students to achieve more qualifications whilst providing a better learning experience. However, there are unresolved issues of consistency and corporate expectation of student achievement, that need addressing particularly in Key Stage 3.

Inconsistencies of practice across and within departments result in a varied learning experience for students. This reflects a lack of robustness in monitoring and subsequent rapid intervention and support by some leaders. Others model excellent practice and lead their teams very well, seeking external support to improve teaching and learning where necessary. They have initiated some very good strategies, and shared them through groups such as the 'Collaborative Learning' staff workshops but these have not yet been fully harnessed and embedded across the school. As a result, the rate of improvement remains inconsistent.

The school is yet to target the highest achievement for students in all year groups through its school targets and improvement planning. As a result, there is not a clear, shared expectation communicated to leaders at all levels. There are sound systems and staffing structures in the school that enable good planning with identified priorities for the whole school, departments and individual staff. Line management systems are clear and there is regular review of both student and staff performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

| | | |
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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall | 16-19 |
|---|----------------|-------|

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

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 2 |
| 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? | 2 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 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? | 2 | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 | 2 |
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 | 2 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 | |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | |
| 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

20 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Yateley School, Yateley, GU46 6NW

My colleagues and I recently inspected your school. I am writing to inform you of our findings. Yateley is a good school with some excellent teaching. Results in tests and examinations are above the national average and you make faster progress in Key Stage 4 due to a more focused approach from the school. Results in Key Stage 3 have not been as good as they should be the school has begun to work hard to address this.

Those of you we met with in the main school were very enthusiastic about the school and the opportunities it offers particularly for performing arts. Those in the sixth form told us how much it had improved recently and we found that we agreed with you. All of you tell us that the school is a safe and enjoyable place. You get on well with your teachers who know their subjects well. However, not all teaching provides you with the right tasks and activities to help you make good progress particularly in Key Stage 3. This means not everyone reaches his or her targets in Year 9. The school tracks your progress well. From this tracking, it has developed a popular mentoring system to help those who are falling behind and this has been very effective for GCSE students.

The headteacher, senior staff and other leaders are improving your school and I have asked them to make sure they build on the progress so far by:

- Making sure that the teaching that you receive from all of your teachers is as good as that of the best in the school. You can help by always doing your best.
- Making sure that every teacher in the school has the highest expectations of you and plans to get the maximum possible results from you at Key Stage 3 and in GCSEs
- Making sure that marking of your work clearly tells you how to get better in the subject.

There is a lot to be proud of in your school. I hope you will continue to work with your teachers to bring about further improvements for Yateley.

Yours faithfully

Peter Gale

Her Majesty's Inspector