

The Magna Carta School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125258
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	293239
Inspection dates	25–26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip White
Headteacher	Mr Tim Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Thorpe Road Staines TW18 3HJ
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Magna Carta School is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive of above average size. The very large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The school is in one of the most disadvantaged social areas in Surrey. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just below average. There are fewer students than usual with a first language not believed to be English. Almost a quarter of students have been identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, which is above average.

The school has seen considerable changes in the last three years. Teacher turbulence had seen almost half the staff change in 2004. This reduced to 8% in September 2006. The school is a Specialist Technology College, which focuses on design technology, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies.

A comment from one parent correctly reflects the changes being made at the school: 'I am very pleased with the direction the school is going in and feel it has really improved over the last two years'. The Magna Carta School is improving and is now a good school. It has made good progress since the last inspection in March 2005. Prior to that inspection the school went through a long period of turbulence as a result of significant staff change. Students' achievements declined during this period due to inconsistency in the overall quality of teaching and the behaviour of some students. However, there has been significant improvement since September 2005 with the stability of staffing improving significantly. This resulted in above average test results at the end of Year 9 in 2006. Students achieving GCSE results at the higher grades were overall in line with national averages. However, results in English and mathematics were above national averages. The inconsistency of GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2006 was a legacy of the period of change.

The school accurately judged that teaching had not been good enough to help students do as well as they could. In response the school has introduced more rigorous monitoring of teaching, and targeted support and training for teachers. The impact of this can be seen in the improved quality of teaching, which was seen during the inspection, and is now good. Lessons are more focused on learning so that students' achievement is good. However, some lessons are still only satisfactory, mainly because a minority of teachers do not ensure work is well matched to the needs of all students. This inconsistency means that students do not achieve as well as they can in all subject areas.

Most parents are strongly supportive of the school's drive for improvement and consider the school '...a very approachable place where everyone is valued'. Personal development is good and has played a major role in helping students to respect their school and to value their learning opportunities. Behaviour has improved significantly and is now good. Most students behave well and attend very regularly because they enjoy school. Students are particularly keen on the rich opportunities for out-of-hours activities such as in sport and drama. They take responsibilities seriously and some provide good service to their fellows through their work in supporting Year 7 students settle into school. They are keen to stay healthy and participate well in physical activities. Effective personal and social education and personal guidance prepares students well for the future. Racial harmony and inclusion are strong features of the school.

The school has improving systems for the collection, analysis and use of assessment data. However, the school does not consistently use the system so that all students are set appropriately challenging targets. There are secure systems to ensure that students learn in a safe environment.

The very effective headteacher, strongly supported by the senior team and governors, is managing the school well. He has set a clear direction for raising standards. The positive effects of senior leadership are increasingly evident in the upward trend in external examinations. Younger students are achieving well with improving standards evident in English, mathematics and science. Overall standards at Year 11 are good with all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, making good progress. The school provides good value for money and the capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the teaching is consistently good and outstanding so that all students achieve as well as they can in all subject areas.
- Make full use of data so that all students are set challenging targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Students join the school with broadly average attainment. Based on 2006 results, standards were above national averages at the end of Year 9. GCSE results at the higher grades were overall in line with national averages. In contrast English and mathematics were above national averages. However, inspection evidence indicates that significant improvement has been made recently. The current higher standards show that lost ground has been recovered and students are now on course to achieve above average results in GCSE at the end of Year 11.

Results in 2006 showed achievement in Years 7 to 9 was good overall when judged against standards on entry. Inspection evidence shows that achievement has continued to be good during 2007. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 was satisfactory in 2006. Achievement was good in English and mathematics but was inconsistent in other subjects. For example results in ICT and technology were below national averages. Recent evidence clearly shows that achievement has significantly improved because of more stable staffing and a curriculum that better matches students needs. Students are now on line to achieve good results.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress throughout the school. The good achievement is supported by the improving use of assessment data to track the progress of students throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of the students are good. The overwhelming majority of students enjoy school, do their best to be on time for lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. Students behave well, feel safe, and are clear about staying safe outside school. Students appreciate the importance of staying healthy. High numbers take part in sports and other physical activities during daily enrichment sessions, and this reflects their commitment to fitness and adopting a healthy lifestyle. Students take on responsibility willingly, for example by acting as peer-mentors for younger students and school prefects who ably assist in the smooth running of the school. In the wider community students make an outstanding contribution through a range of activities including fund raising and charity events.

Attendance is monitored rigorously and is steadily improving which displays students increasing enthusiasm for attending school. Students work well together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Students and parents are keen to point out that '...this is a friendly school'. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and is reflected in the harmonious and inclusive relationships that prevail in The Magna Carta School.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved and are now good. Teaching has improved in all subjects including technology and ICT. Students' learning is now the main focus of teaching. One parent said, 'The school's motto and;quot;Learning with Respectand;quot; is something I strongly agree with'. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and they show a high level of enjoyment and interest in their work, often taking a leading part in lessons. One student said, 'we learn more when we are involved'.

Teachers show enthusiasm for their subjects. They plan their lessons well with appropriate and varied activities, although sometimes the work is not well matched to the needs of all the students. Teachers' explanations are clear and pupils engage well with their learning. Lessons have good pace and the use of whiteboard technology in some lessons promotes excellent learning. Teachers use skilful questioning to help pupils deepen their understanding and in some lessons they involve them in the assessment of their work. In an outstanding French lesson the teacher continually worked with each student to check how well they were meeting their learning objectives. Marking is carried out regularly to inform the pupils how to improve their work, although the standard of this is not yet consistent.

Teachers are encouraged to be self-reflective and critical of their own teaching. This is having a positive impact on learning and raising the achievement of students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The broad and balanced curriculum is well matched to students' learning needs and aspirations through both the setting arrangements and the types of courses provided. For example, students who enter the school with literacy and numeracy standards below those expected make good progress in these skills because of catch-up programmes. Gifted and talented students take GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10, and then choose from two further mathematics courses for Year 11. However within sets, there is insufficient matching of tasks to students' differing learning needs. All Key Stage 4 students take courses in citizenship and design and technology, and about half choose a modern foreign language. In response to weaknesses in pupils' achievement in design and technology and ICT, the curriculum has been improved and students' achievement is improving. A high proportion of students enjoy the good range of academic and vocational courses they are offered for Key Stage 4. Students enjoy the very good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities, which have particular strengths in the performing arts, sports and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The annual enrichment week for Key Stage 3 provides excellent residential courses for Year 9 students. Through its specialist status, the school has collaborated well with some community partners.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has good systems to promote students' personal, social and academic development. The school links extremely well with partner primary schools to ensure that new students settle quickly and happily into Year 7. A strong feature of

the school is the support for different groups of students with diverse needs. One parent commented 'Concern, care and attention are displayed to those pupils with special needs and to those that just need a bit of encouragement'.

Following the introduction of the house system there are now clear guidelines for good behaviour which help all students to know exactly what is expected of them and the consequences of inappropriate actions. Students with more complex social, emotional and behavioural needs are particularly well supported as a result of good relationships with staff. There is effective support and monitoring and students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of additional help to improve literacy skills.

Safeguarding procedures are of good quality and early identification of students requiring skilled support is provided swiftly by external agencies.

Most students interviewed during the inspection could explain their targets. However, they were less clear as to what they needed to do in order to progress to the next level. There are good systems for data collection but they are not used consistently to target support for individual students that would enable them to improve still further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and are becoming increasingly effective at all levels in the school. The headteacher is highly regarded by staff, students and parents. He is well supported by a very able senior management team who have a clear and good understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring development. Management actions have had a very positive impact on achievement and behaviour so that both are now good. The school has worked hard on recruitment and retention of staff so that the staffing issues the school faced have been successfully resolved. The school is popular and oversubscribed, and parents comment that under the leadership of the headteacher and senior team the school has made significant steps in raising standards.

The school's specialist status is helping to raise standards in core subjects. There are improving links with foundation subjects especially technology and ICT which have supported significant improvement. Rigorous self evaluation processes are in place so that leaders and managers at all levels can contribute to school improvement by planning effectively for the development of their area of responsibility. Monitoring by middle managers demonstrates they have a good awareness of the work within their departments and heads of house monitor students' academic performance as well as providing support and care. Although effective links are developing between managers at all levels, the school recognises there are some inconsistencies in its performance between subjects. The school monitors teaching and learning accurately. Intervention and training provided by senior leaders has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and students' behaviour. As a result, students' achievement and personal development are now good. However inconsistencies in the use of data mean that not all students have sufficiently challenging targets. Opportunities for sharing good practice within the school are developing well and planning for appropriate professional development is good and linked well to the school development plan.

Governors take a keen interest in the progress the school is making and discharge their duties well. They are involved in school life and actively seek the views of parents. Leadership and

management have brought about the necessary improvements since the last inspection, well targeted actions have promoted good improvement and as a result the capacity for further improvement is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	2
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	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	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

9 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Magna Carta School, Staines, TW18 3HJ

After our visit to The Magna Carta School we would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome. A special thanks to those of you who took time to talk to us. We are pleased that you enjoy school and the many opportunities it provides, particularly the after-school activities. We are equally pleased that most of you behave so well in class and around the site. You attend well, know about healthy eating and join in many physical activities. We appreciate the challenges you have faced in trying to improve your learning, and recognise the progress that you have made.

We think that your school is providing you with a good education and that it is improving all the time. There are many things that are good about your school, not least that it is an harmonious community where everyone is valued equally. Your teachers are very committed to helping you and they look after you well. Your headteacher is working very hard, with the rest of the staff, to ensure that there is every opportunity for you to learn as well as you can. Overall standards are rising and you are now making good progress.

We have asked your headteacher to ensure the teaching is consistently good and outstanding so that you all achieve as well as you can in all subject areas. We also want the teachers to make full use of assessment data so that you are set challenging targets.

We wish you all the best for your future success.

Roger Whittaker

Lead inspector