



Esher CofE High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125274
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293246
Inspection dates 27–28 September 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	More Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Esher
Age range of pupils	11–16		KT10 8AP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01372 468068
Number on roll (school)	929	Fax number	01372 471058
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Baz Mehta
		Headteacher	Mr Simon Morris
Date of previous school inspection	22 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	27–28 September 2006	293246

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Esher Church of England High School is a popular, average sized comprehensive school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below that found in most schools, as is the percentage whose first language is not English. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is similar to most schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. The school has specialist school status in the performing arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Esher Church of England High School provides students with a good education. The school is popular within the local community and has significantly increased in size since the last inspection. The headteacher and the school leadership team are clearly focussed on raising achievement and promoting the success of all students. During the last two years there has been an increased focus on monitoring and improving the quality of teaching in the school. Teaching and learning are now good although some variation in quality across the school remains. For example, during the inspection much good, and some outstanding, teaching was observed as well as a very small amount that was inadequate. This improvement in teaching has led to improving student achievement. Standards at the end of Year 11 rose significantly in 2006. The school's effective tracking system indicates that standards are continuing to rise. Standards are now above the national average and students make good progress in their learning during their time at the school. Progress is particularly good in English.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The school has good systems of monitoring and evaluation. The headteacher is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has good plans to tackle those areas in need of improvement. He is well supported by the senior leadership team, however, there is variation in the rigour with which some middle managers in the school implement and drive through their improvement plans.

The personal development of students is good. They enjoy and speak positively about their time at school. Good relationships exist between students and teachers and behaviour is good. Attendance is at the national average. The care, guidance and support of students are good. Teachers know and care for students well. During the last two years effective systems of setting targets for students and tracking their progress have been introduced. Those students identified as underachieving have been provided with effective support. This has included mentoring, booster classes and a Saturday club. This support has helped raise achievement in the school. The school provides a good curriculum that meets students' needs, interests and abilities. The school's specialist status in performing arts has added an extra dimension to students' education. It has enabled the school to extend its curriculum and enrich the outstanding range of extra curricular activities available to them.

The rise in standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 demonstrate that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.
- Improve the rigour with which some middle leaders drive improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The attainment of students on entry to the school has been increasing in recent years and is now broadly average. Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 have also been rising steadily over the past four years. Tests results in 2006 indicate that standards are now above average and that students are making good progress in their learning between Years 7 to 9.

There was a significant improvement in Year 11 examination results in 2006. The standards obtained by this year group were similar to the national average. This followed two years when standards at the end of Year 11 were well below average. There is some variation between the progress made by students in different subjects. For example, the progress made by students in English during Years 10 and 11 is very good enabling them to reach high standards. The school's effective tracking system shows that standards are continuing to rise in Years 10 and 11 and are now above the national average. The progress made by all groups of students between Years 7 to 11 is good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy being at this school. Their personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed through the citizenship and pastoral programmes and is good. Cultural awareness was especially deepened for senior students in an assembly where they reflected about Ramadan and fasting. Students are very aware of those less fortunate than themselves. Having purchased fishing boats and school equipment for victims of the tsunami, a group travelled to Sri Lanka to help re-build the school.

Behaviour is good. Students get on well with each other and their teachers and are quick to celebrate the achievements of others. The school is working with parents to improve attendance which is similar to the national average. Students feel safe and are actively encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through several physical activities open to them and the canteen's healthy menus. Proud to be members of the school council, students take on a range of responsibilities, developing good team and leadership qualities in preparation for life after school. They are well prepared for the world of the work, through business projects and good careers advice.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good although there is variation in quality across the school. Teachers know students well and they plan effectively to meet their differing learning

needs. Good questioning skills take students forward by exploring ideas in depth. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards which have a positive visual impact that motivates and engages students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and this supports learning well. Students' attitudes to learning are good and effective management of behaviour results in lessons being taught at a brisk pace with little interruption. In a minority of lessons the teaching does not reach these high standards because the learning activities are not pitched at the right level or they do not interest and engage students.

The quality of assessment is good. On a day to day basis, students receive good feedback on their work and they know how well they are doing and what they need to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that provides a broad range of subjects and activities well matched to the needs and interests of all its students. In Years 10 and 11 the three curriculum pathways provide students with good academic and vocational choice. Links with a further education college extend this choice. The school's specialist performing arts status and its work through the Elmbridge Partnership help establish strong links with primary schools, providing a good bridging programme for Year 7 students.

Since the previous inspection the school has effectively focussed on improving students' skills in literacy, personal, social and health education and information and communications technology. Numeracy skills across subjects have not been effectively developed due to staffing issues. The school provides an excellent range of after school clubs and visits to enrich the curriculum. These activities are very popular with students and contribute significantly to their overall achievement and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care is good. It contributes well to students' enjoyment of school life. Vulnerable students and those at risk are highly valued and sensitively supported. They have a 'safe haven' in the school. There are good links with several specialists and agencies. The school's nurse, counsellor, staff for student services and the community policeman crucially add particular expertise. There is good support for those with behavioural and emotional needs and with learning difficulties because all are well known to staff. Care is closely tailored to their needs. Consequently, overall they are making similar progress to others.

The school has recently made effective use of attainment data to set students challenging targets. Most students are aware of their targets and what they have to do to meet them. Saturday school for the 'Amber Group', who need extra learning time to achieve higher grades, is popular.

Students feel safe. Arrangements for safeguarding them are strong and up-to-date.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has continued to drive the school forward in his quest to improve the progress made by all students. The restructured leadership team have a clear focus on improving teaching quality and student achievement. They have developed a comprehensive data collection system linked to the monitoring of lesson quality. They also use attainment data well to set challenging targets for students. Good systems are now in place to track the progress of students towards these targets. All this data is thoroughly analysed and used to inform action in raising standards. These new initiatives are not yet fully embedded but are already making an impact on the culture of accountability and student progress.

The school is developing effective systems of monitoring and evaluation at all levels of management within the school. However, there is variability in the robustness with which middle leaders drive forward improvement. The school is developing the leadership skills of some of its middle leaders through coaching.

The governing body is well informed about the strengths and weaknesses within the school. They make regular targeted visits connected with responsibilities agreed by governors. They are prepared to challenge and question the school about standards and are fully involved in school self- evaluation.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

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	3
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?	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.

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

Thank you very much to all of you who spoke to us and answered our questions during the recent inspection of your school. We very much appreciate the help that you gave us. Now that we have finished the inspection I am writing to tell you of our findings.

We thought your school provides you with a good education. Your headteacher leads the school well. He wants the very best for all of you and he is well supported by other senior teachers. You are taught well and are making good progress, particularly in English. Many of you that we spoke to were aware of your targets and what you had to do to achieve them. The school tracks your progress well and good support is provided through booster classes and the 'Saturday Club' for those of you who need it.

Your teachers also take good care of you. You told us you feel safe and secure while in school. You all get on well with each other and behave well. The school offers you a broad range of both academic and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. It was also good to see so many of you involved in the school's outstanding range of after school clubs and activities

Although your school is good it could become even better and so we have identified two areas we would like it to improve. Many of your lessons are pitched at the right level for you and contain activities that are interesting and enjoyable. However, this is not always the case and so we have asked the school to ensure that all your lessons are as good as the best. Most heads of department also have good plans to improve their subjects and lead these developments well. We have asked the school to ensure that this is true in all subjects.

Thank you again and I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector