



Guildford County School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125300
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293259
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Judith Rundle HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Farnham Road
School category	Foundation		Guildford
Age range of pupils	11–19		GU2 4LU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01483 504089
Number on roll (school)	907	Fax number	01483 300849
Number on roll (6th form)	153		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Paul Martin
		Headteacher	Mr Peter Costello
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	18–19 October 2006	293259

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average secondary school with specialist status in music. Numbers on roll have declined slightly in the last two years. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are fewer students with statements of educational need than in most schools. The proportions of students with English as an additional language or with learning difficulties are below the national average although they have been increasing over the last two years. Attendance is in line with the national average and the school has a stable pupil population. The majority of pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds.

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 good. The headteacher has set a clear vision for the improvement of the school and is ably supported by a strong leadership team. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Monitoring of the school's own work is now robust and accurately reflects the school. Information gained during monitoring activities is leading to better targeted development based on the needs of students and teachers. As a result the school has good capacity to improve further.

Students' achievement is good. It had previously been satisfactory but the school's robust actions to improve this show positive impact on the improved rate of progress for the majority of students. Results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are significantly above national averages although the progress students made from their starting point on entry to the school was only satisfactory. Work observed during the inspection indicates that the rate of progress in the majority of lessons is now good. This is a result of recently introduced initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Initiatives for sharing what is to be learned, more varied teaching methods and procedures for assessing progress are showing a positive impact, although there is some inconsistency. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good.

The school has comprehensive procedures for tracking the progress of students and marking work although they are not used fully effectively within all subjects or by all teachers. Where these are used particularly well, such as in mathematics and history, students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work further.

Students that underachieve are identified early and appropriate remedial actions are put in place to help them catch up in their work.

Personal development of students is a strength of the school especially in the sixth form. Students have good opportunities for their voice to be heard via the student council and make a positive contribution to both the school and wider community. The procedures for communication with parents have improved although the range of opportunities for contact and communication are not as explicit as they could be. A minority of parents indicate that they would like more contact between themselves and the school.

The school has developed a very positive ethos of learning and the influence of both the house system and specialist music status is strong especially in the range of additional opportunities now provided.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

All students have the right to join the sixth form and the curriculum has been suitably adapted to meet their needs. However many classes are very small and are not cost effective. The school has identified this and is already working towards changing provision without adversely affecting students. Sixth form students have excellent opportunities to take responsibilities and leadership roles in the school especially

within the house system and are good role models. Leadership of the sixth form is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency with which teachers identify and share what students are intended to learn in lessons, and the quality of feedback given in the marking of work, in order to ensure that all students reach their full potential.
- Make more explicit to parents and carers the range of opportunities for contact and communication.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students attain well above average standards in their work and examination results. In the national tests for 14 year olds, 2005 results were exceptionally high and well above national averages. School targets for the number of students reaching above the nationally expected level were realistically high and met. Results in GCSE examinations were above the national average with students performing particularly well in English literature, history and music.

Achievement has improved and is now good. The school recognizes that, although test and examination results are well above average, a few students make only satisfactory progress. When students enter the school at age 11 their standard of work is above average. Students who sat GCSE examinations in 2005 made less progress than was expected when they were in Key Stage 3 and satisfactory progress during Years 10 and 11. Progress in all year groups improved last year. Work seen during the inspection indicates that students are now making good progress as a result of initiatives in teaching and learning. Students with English as an additional language or learning difficulties make the same progress as others in the school.

Students in the sixth form who took A level examinations in 2005 made satisfactory progress from their starting point. Results were average when compared with national outcomes. Early analysis of the 2006 results indicates that students made good progress to reach above average standards, with the majority gaining the higher A and B grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being across the school are good with some outstanding elements. The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is outstanding. Students know right from wrong and the vast majority are mindful of others feelings. They have excellent opportunities to work collaboratively and to learn about other cultures through events such as the Year 7 Africa Day.

Although a minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, no inappropriate behaviour was observed. Students say that they enjoy school, especially lessons in mathematics and the additional opportunities in music and physical education.

Students make an outstanding contribution to both the school and the wider community, especially sixth form students. For example the support sixth formers give to the youngest students during their first weeks in school, buddy reading and organisation of house drama productions is excellent. All students fully embrace raising money for nominated charities which are agreed through the student council. Fundraising activities are extremely well led and managed by sixth formers. The student council has democratically elected members from each age group who take forward peer concerns and suggestions and report back on discussions and subsequent actions taken by the leadership team.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Students enjoy their learning because recent initiatives to broaden teaching methods used in lessons take good account of their preferred learning styles. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In many lessons learning intentions are clear and shared with pupils, the interactive whiteboard is used confidently and activities are well paced. Assessment is used very effectively and questioning challenges students to think creatively. A strength in sixth form teaching is helping students to become independent in their own learning.

In the few lessons where teaching is less than good, learning objectives are unclear and sometimes confused with activities. The pace is slow and inappropriately challenging. The new procedure for marking students' work to help them know how well they are doing and how to improve further is very well done in several subjects but this is not fully embedded in all subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities have well targeted support including from teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good throughout the school with outstanding opportunities for enhancement and enrichment, particularly in music. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities and clubs suit a wide range of interests. The opportunities provided for boys to sing are exceptional.

A well-planned citizenship programme is taught as a discrete subject throughout the school covering topics in good depth. Issues from the last inspection have been fully resolved. Gifted and talented students have good opportunities outside and within

school to further their special interests and talents in subjects and via mock United Nations and magistrate's court.

The sixth form curriculum is good. The range of subjects offered meets the needs of students well although many classes are too small to be cost effective. The new football coaching course is particularly popular and both critical thinking and general studies courses are now available alongside a good range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is outstanding especially the support for students at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. They have good programmes that enable them to make progress in developing their language skills. Students with learning difficulties or social needs are also very well supported. They are identified early, especially when joining the school in Year 7. Teachers and support staff show good care of individual students and monitor their development. School data indicates that any reported bullying is dealt with appropriately and the majority of parents are satisfied with the swiftness of response if they report an incident. The school appropriately includes information on bullying during personal social and health education lessons. Students say that no bullying takes place but know what to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns.

New procedures for assessing the progress that students make are being used well in the drive to ensure all reach their full potential. They are also effective in identifying underachievement. Good actions are being taken to ensure students have opportunities to catch up with missed work or strengthen their understanding. Students now have good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. The recently introduced procedures to share learning objectives using 'what are we learning today' (walt) and success criteria through 'what I look for' (wilf) have improved the rate of progress most students make in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The teaching staff and recently strengthened leadership team share the vision of the headteacher, who is held in high esteem across the school. Together they have taken the school forward very effectively, especially in their focus on promoting high quality learning in the classroom. There is a very clear, shared ethos of promoting high standards in every aspect of school life while maintaining its traditions and special character. Evaluation of its own work is good and all aspects of school performance are monitored well. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous and carefully linked to the development needs of staff. Subject and pastoral leadership are very effective. Teamwork is a characteristic of the school and it is

effective in supporting new teachers and teachers in training. Financial and other resources are appropriately managed and effectively deployed.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Standards have been maintained and improved. The role of senior students has been very effectively promoted across the school.

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

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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	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

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school. We spoke to a number of you in groups, during lessons and looked at your work. We also had responses from a number of your parents.

We found your school to be good overall with some stronger features. They are indicated below:

- results at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are significantly above national averages;
- new procedures for assessing work and helping you to understand how to improve further are starting to help all of you make better progress in learning;
- you have outstanding opportunities for personal development, especially in the sixth form;
- teaching includes a range of methods to suit the ways you learn and is good across the school;
- the influence of the specialist music status is strong and has led to more opportunities for you to perform especially for boys singing;
- the headteacher and leadership team have set a clear vision for the improvement of the school.

We do however believe that there are things your school could do better:

- improve the consistency of how teachers identify and share what you are intended to learn in lessons, and the quality of feedback given in the marking of your work, in order to ensure that you reach your full potential;
- make more explicit to parents and carers the range of opportunities for contact and communication.

We would like to thank you for the courteous way that you welcomed us to the school and encourage you to continue to work hard. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle HMILead Inspector