

Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110496
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310333
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Nigel Fletcher HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1011
6th form	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Lawrence
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Box
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2004
School address	Oxford Road Aylesbury HP21 8PE
Telephone number	01296 424781
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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 average sized grammar school serves Aylesbury and north Buckinghamshire. Students' attainment on entry is well above average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and disabilities is lower than in schools nationally. Almost all students transfer into the sixth form. Around twenty to thirty students also join the sixth form from other schools. The school acquired specialist status in performing arts in 2004 and science in 2007. It has been granted a range of accreditations and awards including Healthy Schools and the Buckinghamshire Community Leadership Award. The headteacher has been in post since April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Sir Henry Floyd School is a good and improving school where students achieve high standards and develop outstanding personal skills. Standards reached by the students are well above those found nationally and students achieve well in their learning throughout the main school, but particularly at Key Stage 3. Students enjoy school and arrive eager to learn because, as one parent reported, 'The teaching staff are far more interested and motivated than any I remember from my schooldays'. Parents report favourably on the progress, and growing confidence and self-esteem of their children. Students enjoy good relationships with their teachers, and the quality of teaching is good overall. However, in some lessons, insufficient attention is given to providing challenge for those who have the ability to achieve very high results. The lack of good computing facilities prevent students from fully exploiting information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning, and prevent them from further developing independent learning techniques.

School leaders are fully aware of how well the school is doing, and have an excellent understanding of its strengths and the means by which it can improve further. The senior management team provides good leadership to a committed staff. It has the full support of staff, parents and an exemplary governing body, although some parents would like better communication from the school.

Many parents agree that the school is 'an inspiring place' which 'encourages the development of the students' character and personality as well as their academic skills'. The school has a caring and inclusive ethos where students respect their teachers and peers in a calm, productive learning environment. They feel safe and are confident about the good care and support they receive from staff. Bullying is rare, and instances of when it does happen are dealt with effectively and sympathetically. Students behave well around the school, clearly relishing all aspects of school life. There are no age or social barriers amongst the students. Older students are willing to help the younger students both in and out of school. Students are fully aware of the need for healthy living. They insist on healthy food and the very active school council was instrumental in improving the lunch menu.

The curriculum meets the needs of students well, although the school is aware of the need to improve opportunities for work-related experience for students after Year 9. It provides an extensive range of additional sporting, academic, cultural and personal enrichment activities in which there is high participation. The school's performing arts specialism has a good impact on improving learning across the school. Students value the dimension that this has brought to their school including the many external activities and performances in which the school takes part. Despite the poor sports accommodation, students participate in many sporting opportunities, often using external facilities.

The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and has a strong capacity to continue to improve. One parent commented that 'the emphasis seems to be on producing well-rounded human beings who will remember their time at school with fond memories'. Many parents say that they would recommend the school to others.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Overall, the quality of provision in the sixth form is good. Retention rates are high and the vast majority of students go on to continue their studies at university. The attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is above average. The results they achieve in GCE Advanced (A) Level examinations are above national averages, and they make satisfactory progress. A majority of students gain the highest grades.

Although there is some good and outstanding teaching, the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In some subjects students with high ability are given insufficient challenge to enable more to achieve the highest grades at A Level. Some parents expressed concerns about occasional lack of class cover. However, senior leaders are fully aware of the areas for concern. There is a clear vision for the future and appropriate strategies have recently been implemented. Although these are beginning to show improvements, they are yet to have an impact on students' achievement.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They flourish with the high level of care and guidance to become mature, reflective young adults. The broad academic curriculum well suits their particular needs and aspirations for higher academic study, although some students would welcome more work-related experience. Students enjoy the sixth form and play a full and enthusiastic part in the school community and beyond. They offer guidance and support to younger students and act as excellent role models, for instance, through peer mentoring, and taking part in teaching the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the proportion of good or better lessons, with a specific focus on providing challenge for high-attaining students across the school, to enable them to achieve higher standards.
- Extend the opportunities for work-related experience for students.
- Improve access to ICT facilities to support learning and the development of independent learning in students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school in Year 7 with high attainment. They reach standards that are outstanding, and achieve well. Most students make good academic progress. However, this is not consistent across the school, being higher in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results are well above average compared with schools nationally. Students make good progress, with two thirds of students attaining the highest levels in English, mathematics and science.

GCSE results are well above average. The majority of students attain standards considerably higher than the expected level for the age group in the majority of subjects. For example, almost all students gained five passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Although grades were significantly high in most subjects, students did not perform as well as expected in drama, English literature and PE in 2007.

An individualised tracking and assessment system identifies underperforming students. For example, mentoring and extra academic support are provided to high-attaining students whose

progress is lower than might be expected. However, these have been recently implemented and their impact has yet to be seen. The school analyses the performance of specific groups of learners and takes action to address any differences. For example, students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. They enjoy school, and attendance is well above average. Students behave well around the school. However, where the behaviour of a small minority of students is less than good in lessons it is managed well by staff.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. As one parent commented, 'The mixed environment, and ethnic diversity, etc. is used to great effect in creating tolerance of different faiths and communities'. Students take on many responsibilities, for example, as prefects and buddies, and show exceptionally good skills in working with others for the benefit of the school and the wider community. Students have ample opportunities for reflection and are guided in an understanding of care and respect for others. As a result, there is a strong sense of community and mutual support, and a shared sense of pride in the school.

Students' opinions are respected and acted upon. They are represented at governing body meetings, and take part in staff interviews. Students have an excellent understanding of issues related to healthy lifestyles and personal safety reflecting the quality of the revised personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. They feel safe, and contributed significantly to the development of the school's anti-bullying policy and strategy.

Students are well motivated. With high academic standards, and good skills in team-work and taking responsibility, they are well prepared for the next stage of education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is good, resulting in high standards. Staff are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Lessons are well structured with a variety of activities, and students know what they are expected to learn. The better lessons are well planned to meet the individual needs of all learners, and work at a pace that is brisk and productive; activities captivate the interests of students and they help each other to learn. However, in some lessons, students do not receive sufficient challenge to enable a greater proportion to gain the very high grades in their GCSE examinations. The setting and marking of homework are inconsistent and some teachers do not make sufficiently clear to students of what they are capable, and how they can improve.

Through the school's new specialist status in science, ICT resources have improved. However, there is still insufficient access for students to use ICT effectively to support their learning, or for them to develop independent learning skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of its students well and the school has effective guidance systems to ensure provision matches need. Students in Years 7 to 9 enjoy a balanced curriculum with the addition of two languages. Those in Years 10 and 11 study separate sciences and have a wide choice of GCSE courses. Opportunities are also provided for some students to take tests and examinations early, for example, Year 9 students are following the GCSE course in performing arts.

The school is aware of the need to further develop work-related skills although aspects of the PSHE and citizenship programmes ensure good economic, health and environmental awareness. Students describe the outstanding range and quality of extracurricular activities, including sporting, musical and drama, provided across the school as 'brilliant'. The school is rightly proud of this area of its work. Participation is high and the school offers a broad range of residential trips both at home and abroad. Specialist status is having a positive impact on the breadth and diversity of the curriculum throughout the school and in the community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students say that the school is a caring and welcoming place where they can always find someone, staff or fellow student, to support them; staff value them as individuals, and enhance their confidence and self-esteem. They are secure in the knowledge that their problems will be quickly and effectively dealt with. Good partnerships with outside agencies ensure that welfare support and guidance are strong. Procedures for safeguarding children are well established and statutory checks are in place.

Exemplary guidance and support arrangements for students entering Year 7 ensures a good transition from primary school. Students who join at other stages in their education speak highly of the school and, as one boy commented, 'I've been to two schools previously but never experienced the support from teachers, and the student relationships, that I get here.' Good guidance on options at all stages of their school life allows students to make the appropriate choices to suit their needs.

Information about student attainment allows teachers to set appropriate academic targets for the students. However, their use in raising attainment is inconsistent across the school and not all students can say what their targets are or what levels they are working towards.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive a high standard of support, and achieve well. Academic enrichment opportunities have recently been improved for students with high ability, but are not yet sufficiently embedded to show an improvement in student achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides clear and strong leadership and is ably supported by an effective and dedicated senior leadership team. With a supportive and committed staff, he is creating a thriving school which cares for its students and enables them to make good progress. There is a strong commitment to inclusion, and the care of all students is high priority.

The school's self-evaluation of its provision is excellent, building successfully on rigorous departmental self-evaluation. The process of regular departmental review is robust, and middle managers are set challenging targets for further development. Many initiatives and systems for improvement have recently been implemented, but it is too early to see the impact of these. The lesson observation scheme provides a good indication of the quality of teaching and learning, but in some aspects is slightly over-generous in assessing the learning taking place by high-ability students.

Senior leaders welcome parents' opinions and take appropriate actions to support the school's development. Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They have an excellent strategic overview of the school and provide appropriate challenge to senior leaders. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Although the quality of sports facilities has not improved, and much of the accommodation remains outdated, the governors have well developed plans for their improvement. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Recent action to raise achievement demonstrates that there is good capacity for further improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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
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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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	3
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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	1	
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

13 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School, Aylesbury, HP21 8PE

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, talking to your teachers and other staff, and visiting lessons. Many of you and your parents told us how the caring and supportive environment, and your good relationships with teachers, meant that you enjoyed school and felt safe there. We judged your school to be a caring school that is providing you with a good education. We were particularly impressed by:

- your attitude to learning and healthy living, and the way you treat each other with respect
- the way the school is led by senior staff, and the commitment of its staff
- the courses and other activities that the school provides to ensure that you have the best opportunities to make good progress in your academic and personal development
- the commitment of the school to continue to improve the overall experience you receive at school.

To make your school even better we have recommended that it:

- ensures that teachers focus on providing suitable challenge in all lessons to enable you to achieve higher grades in your GCSE and A level examinations
- provides greater opportunities for work-related experience
- improves access to ICT facilities to support learning and for you to use outside lessons.

The senior staff and governors know what needs to be done to improve the school and have plans to do it. We believe that if you behave well and work hard in lessons, and help the school put these plans in place, then standards will rise. On behalf of the inspection team, thank you for making our visit so enjoyable and we wish you every success for the future.

Nigel Fletcher

Her Majesty's Inspector