

Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125261
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315214
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1559
6th form	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colonel Keith Steel
Principal	Mr Anthony Ryles
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2005
School address	Tomlinscote Way Frimley Camberley GU16 8PY
Telephone number	01276 709 050
Fax number	01276 709 060

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The school was visited for one day. Inspectors evaluated the school's overall effectiveness and investigated the following issues in detail: developments in teaching and academic guidance on students' achievement in the main school, the sixth form, the curriculum and the quality of middle leaders. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, other documents provided by the school, observation of the school at work, interviews with staff, students, parents and governors and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College is a larger than average comprehensive school. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups is below average as is those whose first language is not English. The school can accommodate a maximum of 15 statemented students in the Speech, Language and Communication Unit (previously a Literacy Unit). The school is a specialist languages college and a member of the Surrey Heath Partnership for Education (SHAPE) in addition to the Surrey Heath Federation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'Whenever I am in the school there is a 'buzz' that would only be there if the children were happy. I think the school is fantastic!' 'Tomlinscote is a truly excellent school, which upholds the values of caring, discipline and superb organisation as well as many other strengths!' These two statements, typical of many received from parents, help to explain why the school provides a good standard of education with many outstanding features. It is a vibrant, exciting and happy community where students benefit from good teaching, a stimulating curriculum and excellent care, guidance and support. This results in students making good progress and, by the end of Year 11, attaining excellence in both academic standards and their personal development. Parents and students are overwhelmingly appreciative of the school, with one Year 11 student summing up the views of many when commenting, 'We have been given so many opportunities, options and support to achieve well.'

Students arrive in school with high prior attainment and the majority make good progress towards meeting challenging targets. By the end of Year 9, results in national assessment tests in mathematics, English and science are exceptionally high. In particular, over 50% of students achieved the highest levels in mathematics in 2007. Standards in other subjects are also well above average by the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, the students continue to make good progress and, since the last inspection, there has been a sustained improvement in GCSE results. In 2007, the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C passes in GCSE, including English and mathematics, was well above average and all students attained five or more A* to G passes. The progress of students who start school with lower than average ability and those with language and communication difficulties, including the small proportion for whom English is an additional language, is outstanding due to focused, individualised support both in and out of lessons.

Students achieve well because teaching is consistently good, they receive excellent guidance and support, and they have exemplary attitudes to their work. A major contributory factor to the improvement in standards is the school's very rigorous systems for monitoring students' progress and providing extra support when there is evidence of underachievement. Students are well aware of their targets and know what to do to achieve or exceed them. Parents commented on how useful they found the academic mentoring days in which they were involved.

School leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and most lessons are good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subjects that motivates students to succeed. They plan well and frequently ask probing questions. The school has focused staff training on developing teaching strategies that engage all students and provide work that is closely matched to their ability. Staff have fully engaged with this and much good practice is developing, although this has not yet had time to make a major impact on students' progress. The best teaching provides a wide range of creative and imaginative activities that really enthuse all students, and develop their independent learning skills. However, this practice is not yet consistent, so the learning of some students is not as swift as it might be. The school is working to improve the proportion of outstanding lessons to boost progress further. It has recently employed 'learning advocates' to provide additional training and support for staff in developing innovative lessons.

Since the last inspection, the school has been especially responsive to developing a curriculum that reflects the needs of all the students. It has supported this by an investment in information

and communication technology (ICT) equipment. The school now meets all statutory requirements in religious education, citizenship and especially ICT. Further improvements to ICT in Key Stage 4 are planned to enhance this provision. Students have a good choice of academic and vocational courses at Key Stages 4 and 5. Innovative initiatives planned with other schools in the SHAPE consortium, including the introduction of new diplomas, will further increase the choice available. A very wide range of enrichment activities, both in and out of school, enhances the curriculum and contributes strongly to students' enjoyment of school and their learning. There is very good provision for careers education, work experience and work-related learning. This includes the development of a junior version of the Chamber of Commerce, the Young Chamber, the first in Surrey. As a result, students' self-confidence, enterprise and financial skills are developing very well.

The school's specialist language status has a very strong impact on all aspects of school life, and internationalism is embedded in all curriculum areas. There is a wide range of languages on offer, either as part of the main curriculum or as extra-curricular activities. Over 30% of Key Stage 4 students benefit from a two-week intensive course in either Japanese or Mandarin Chinese. In addition, students and staff benefit from a varied programme of international and cultural exchanges including all Year 7 students participating in the schools annual 'international week' in France or Germany. The school is meeting its specialist school targets and is providing very effective support to local primary schools.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding features both of the main school and the sixth form. Positive attitudes pervade, and manifest themselves in warm relationships between all members of the school community. Students' behaviour is excellent. This leads to a very calm and pleasant atmosphere in lessons, where teachers are able to focus on the learning. The extensive coordinated programme of personal, social and health education, assemblies and other activities ensure that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of school life are outstanding. Students are fully aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They feel safe at school and say that incidents of bullying are rare. Students make a very good contribution to the school as a community through the school council, taking on positions of responsibility and through fund raising with one activity raising over £10,000. As one student said, 'I am lucky to be part of a cooperative, supportive community'.

A key factor in the school's success is its outstanding leadership and management, with exemplary leadership from the principal and his dedicated and able senior leadership team. The clear direction and support from this team has led, in turn, to staff at all levels being highly committed to the school and to students' academic and personal development. The senior leadership and governors have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, through rigorous monitoring that includes seeking the views of parents and students. In addition, the school has successfully developed the skills of middle leaders in evaluating performance, for example, through using data effectively and accurately assessing the quality of teaching and learning. The school has successfully addressed the issues identified at the last inspection. It is now moving forward at a rapid pace and demonstrates an excellent capacity to improve. There are many appropriate, and often innovative, actions in place to bring about further improvements. However, development plans do not always show rigorous success criteria or interim reviews by which senior leaders and governors will judge the success of their actions. The governing body are fully involved in the life of the school, supporting the senior leadership and regularly monitoring and if necessary challenging all aspects of the school's work through their Performance Committee.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

In recent years, recruitment to the sixth form has declined due to competition from other local providers. This has led to the average ability on entry to the sixth form being below that found nationally. However, recent initiatives have started to reverse this trend and the number of students joining the sixth form have increased significantly. Sixth formers enjoy their time at school and do well. They make good progress and reach standards that are at the national average by the end of Years 12 and 13. Standards have been rising over the past two years and the school's detailed data clearly indicates that these will be higher again in 2008. The improvements seen in achievement and standards are due to a range of factors. The teachers have good subject knowledge and students appreciate the manner in which the lessons are engaging and interesting. Teachers are firmly focused on setting all students challenging targets and closely monitor the progress each student is making in their subject. Any student who is having difficulties is quickly identified and given support. The curriculum is good and has been extensively modified since the last inspection to include a range of courses, including vocational subjects, which closely match the needs of the students.

The students in the sixth form demonstrate outstanding attitudes and behaviour. They have a pride in their school and provide excellent role models to the younger students. The leadership and management are good and all staff know the students and their needs well. They are committed to the success of all, whether in finding future employment, or gaining entrance to Oxbridge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching to ensure all students reach their aspirational potential.
- Extend school improvement planning at all levels to include clear success criteria and milestones against which to judge the school's progress.

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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?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	3
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	1	

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	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

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?	1	1

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?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
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

26 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Tomlinscote School and Sixth Form College, Camberley, GU16 8PY

Thank you for assisting us with the recent inspection of your school and for making us feel so welcome during our visit. We very much enjoyed meeting you and valued the discussions we had with you. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

Your school is a good school. Many elements of its provision are outstanding. Many of you, your parents and staff at the school told us that your school is a happy, caring and exciting place to be with many opportunities on offer to you. We agree with this view. We found your behaviour to be exemplary and relationships between all members of the school community to be excellent. You develop into confident young people, readily take on responsibilities and make a very valuable contribution to the community.

Through your time at school, you make good progress and many of you do exceptionally well in your examinations. This is due to effective teaching, very careful monitoring of your progress, excellent guidance and, where necessary, extra support. However, we feel that some of you could do even better and we have asked the school to work with teachers to make teaching more innovative and to enable you to take more responsibility for your learning.

A striking feature of Tomlinscote is the international ethos that comes from being a Language College. We felt that this offers you huge range of opportunities to study many different languages, to travel and develop relationships with young people from other countries and cultures.

We were particularly impressed with your Principal, his senior leadership team, and other leaders, who, together with the governors, have set a clear direction for improvement and have excellent plans in place to enable the school to achieve this. In order to monitor how well the school is doing we have asked your principal and other leaders to set clear targets for themselves and check up on these on a regular basis - rather like they do with your progress!

I wish you all a successful and happy life at Tomlinscote and for the future as global citizens of the 21st century.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector