

# The Fitzwimarc School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115338
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	326184
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mitcheson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1349
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Anthony Ellis
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James Fuller
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Hockley Road Rayleigh Essex SS6 8EB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 743884
<b>Fax number</b>	01268 742877

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- what is preventing students making outstanding progress and a higher proportion of them attaining higher results
- the school's firm line on behaviour and the high number of exclusions
- why the school feels it has made outstanding progress since the last inspection but some aspects such as teaching and learning and students' progress remain good.

Evidence was gathered from the school's own self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records. Other evidence included the scrutiny of curriculum and evaluation documents, observation of the school's work, interviews with staff and parental 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, as given in its self-evaluation were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

The Fitzwimarc School is a larger than average school serving the community of Rayleigh, where the level of deprivation is lower than is found nationally. It has a favourable intake and attainment on entry is average. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. The majority of students are White British and very few have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs, the majority of whom have moderate learning difficulties is below the national average. The school is a specialist language college; it plans to change its status to mathematics and computing in September 2009. It became a Trust School in 2008 and plans to introduce a sixth form in 2010. The school is popular with parents and is regularly over-subscribed. It holds a number of awards including Sportsmark Gold, Healthy Schools, Investors in People and a number of school improvement awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The Fitzwimarc School provides its students with an outstanding education. It has an exceptional headteacher whose vision and the standards he expects of students and staff are understood and shared by all. This contributes directly towards an exceptional school ethos where the outstanding personal development and the outstanding care, guidance and support for students create an environment in which young people thrive. An outstanding curriculum offers an extensive choice of GCSE and vocational courses. This is complemented by a fantastic programme of sport, music and arts activities that helps students to develop into pleasant, articulate and polite citizens suitably skilled for further education or employment. The school's specialism in languages gives it a truly international dimension: French, German and Spanish are taught and opportunities to travel abroad and learn about other countries and cultures are exemplary. This makes a huge contribution to students' enjoyment and achievement.

All students, including those who find learning difficult, make rapid progress in Key Stage 3. Progress slows a little in Key Stage 4, but overall remains at least good. Standards are consistently well above the national average in both key stages and have been for the past three years. For example, in 2008 over three quarters of Year 11 students attained at least five or more A\* to C grades and the proportion attaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics was well above the national average. Almost all students left school with five GCSEs and every student attained at least one. Almost all current Year 11 students have already attained the equivalent of at least a C grade in information and communication technology. Current data indicates that the majority of students are on track to meet the challenging targets set for them. A significant proportion of Year 11 students succeeded in attaining C grades in GCSE English and a number of vocational courses earlier this year.

The school acknowledges that a small minority of girls in Year 11 did less well than expected last year, mainly due to alternative curriculum arrangements made for them and a lack of close monitoring during this time. Improved procedures are now in place to ensure that every student achieves their targets. Judicious expansion of vocational learning has led to impressive results in engineering, construction, music, and health and social care. A thorough grounding in basic skills, regular opportunities in enterprise education and higher than average attainment in modern foreign languages helps to broaden students' horizons and secure their future economic well-being.

Students' enjoyment of school encourages them to work hard and do their very best. Many of them reach exceptionally high standards in art, design and technology, science and physical education where the proportion of A\* and A grades attained by students is much higher than average. However, progress is good rather than outstanding due to the quality of teaching and learning, which is good but ranges from outstanding in some lessons to satisfactory in others. Teachers are expected to plan learning activities that meet the needs of students of all abilities. A small sample of observations by inspectors revealed good practice in English and science lessons, but elsewhere students worked at the same rate at times, often dictated by the teacher and were rarely required to work independently for sustained periods of time.

Students' personal development and well being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are outstanding. In this friendly, harmonious school students get on well with their peers and their teachers. They attend regularly and persistent absence is very low. Behaviour is exceptional: students wear their uniform with pride and inspectors lost count of

the number of times students opened doors and spoke politely with them. These high standards are due to the high expectations and clear rules which students understand and obey. The school excludes those who struggle to meet these expectations and, consequently, exclusions are higher than expected. Students told inspectors that school is a safe, healthy and enjoyable place to be and that they feel free from bullying. Representing the school as house captains, prefects, librarians, school councillors, sports leaders and playing in an exceptional array of sports teams is seen as an honour. Their contribution to the community is outstanding: large numbers of students attain awards for community service and sports leadership, they raise funds for local charities and participate in a vast range of school visits, productions and local and national events.

Parents say they would like better communication with teachers, but the overwhelming majority of them expressed their support for the school. Many commented favourably on the commitment of staff and quality of pastoral care and support provided during transition into Year 7 and praised the excellent support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students' welfare is of paramount importance and procedures for safeguarding them are exceptionally rigorous. All students gain good experience of the work-place through placements and volunteering, and through alternative arrangements made for a small number of students not suited to GCSE studies. Careers guidance is a strength; the vast majority of students progress onto further education. Academic guidance is effective but fragmented because monitoring data is collated within departments. Until recently, information held centrally has not been kept fully up to date with on-going assessments.

Outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher have created a school with many strengths and very few weaknesses. Where weaknesses are identified, decisive action is taken to improve them. Self-evaluation is thorough but less effective aspects of the school's work are not always fully explained. A reorganised senior leadership team has contributed well to sustained school improvement. Capacity to make further improvements is outstanding, particularly if these staff are utilised fully and given total responsibility for raising achievement. Intensive monitoring of performance ensures that subject leadership is mostly good and often exceptional. Challenging targets are set and mostly met. The school's specialism has been used well to enhance the lives of students and the community. Highly effective governance has secured the strategic development of the school and ensured that it plays a central role in promoting a cohesive community. It knows its community very well and enjoys a high profile in promoting interaction between students and its numerous partners.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching and learning by providing a sufficient range of opportunities to suit all learners and by building upon the best practice in school to promote greater independence in students' learning.

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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
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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



**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

25 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Fitzwimarc School, Rayleigh, SS6 8EB

Earlier this week, another inspector and I visited your school. We found that it provides you with an outstanding education. Thank you for allowing us to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. We also spent time meeting with your school leaders, several teachers, the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. Throughout the inspection, your behaviour was exceptional and we found you courteous, well mannered and a pleasure to talk with.

Your teachers and other staff ensure that your personal development and well being, curriculum choice and the care, guidance and support provided for you are all outstanding. The standards achieved by you, particularly in GCSE examinations and vocational awards, are well above what is achieved in other schools nationally. You are rightly proud to attend The Fitzwimarc School and many of your parents told us how pleased they are with it.

We judged that some of you make good rather than outstanding progress because further improvements could be made to teaching and learning. Not all lessons provide a sufficient range of opportunities to suit all learners and at times, you all do the same work at the same rate, often set by the teacher. We felt that many of you can be challenged further by being given work to do independently for sustained periods of time in lessons. We have asked teachers to learn from the best practice we saw in lessons to plan different activities that will give you greater independence in your learning.

Mr Fuller is an exceptional headteacher: he and his team of staff go out of their way to make sure that you enjoy school life and ensure that you are very well prepared for further education or the world of work. You can help them to make your school even better than it is by letting members of your school council know your ideas and asking them to share them with senior teachers.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector