

# The Emmbrook School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110060
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wokingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	337431
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Daniel Burton 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Whiting
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nigel Matthias
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 May 2010
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 35 lessons delivered by 34 teachers, and held meetings with students, staff and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at policies, data and analyses, including the school's self-evaluation, governors' minutes and 251 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' academic progress in English and mathematics, both in lessons and over time
- the effectiveness of teachers' use of assessment to ensure lessons provide good support and challenge for different groups of learners
- the impact of school strategies to reduce the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are subject to fixed-term exclusions
- the school's judgement that the sixth form is now outstanding.

## Information about the school

The school and the sixth form have grown in size since the last inspection with the result that the number of students on roll is now just above average. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage, and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also well below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The range of special needs include specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders, emotional and behavioural difficulties and visual or hearing impairment. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

The Emmbrook School has made some important strides forward in the three years since it was last inspected, with the result that a number of important aspects of its work have improved.

- The sixth form has improved significantly and now provides a good quality of education. Sixth form students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community and are excellent role models for younger students. Passionate, determined and ambitious leadership and management of the sixth form, together with teachers' excellent subject knowledge, ensure that most students make good progress in their studies and some make outstanding progress.
- The quality of care, guidance and support has improved and students feel particularly well supported through the good opportunities for peer mentoring and support from adults during college time. Leaders and managers are relentless in ensuring that students with challenging personal circumstances are well cared for and safe.
- The curriculum is good, innovative and flexible. Students in Key Stage 4 benefit from a good range of pathways to choose from to meet their individual needs. Key Stage 3 students are empowered to make the right subject choices at the end of Year 8. Leaders and managers do recognise, however, that the sixth form curriculum does not yet provide sufficient breadth to meet the needs of all groups of learners.
- As a result of these improvements, a number of outcomes for students have improved since the last inspection, including students' attendance, their behaviour and the extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community.

However, the school has been less successful in accelerating students' academic progress and by the end of Key Stage 4, achievement remains satisfactory overall and in the key subjects of English and mathematics. Given their above average starting points, not enough students secure five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. While the school's use of data to identify underachievement has greatly improved and now enables well-targeted support to be put in place for students who need the most help, particularly in English and mathematics, the quality of teaching and learning has not improved sufficiently quickly to secure good overall progress. In particular, the school has not yet ensured that teachers consistently use assessment well to promote good learning. Not all teachers provide clear and precise learning targets by which they and their pupils can accurately assess pupils' progress at the end of each lesson. As a result, students are not able to confidently articulate what they need to do to make rapid progress in developing their subject-specific skills or their general progress over

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time. These weaknesses are exacerbated by marking which fails to provide clear guidance on students' progress against personal targets.

While target setting across the school is based on increasingly accurate assessment information, the current targets are not demanding enough and even if met will still represent only satisfactory progress, given students' starting points.

The school has a broadly accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and the impact of leadership and management is seen clearly in an emerging trend of improvement. As a result the school has good capacity to improve further.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve teachers' use of assessment to increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons to 85% by December 2011, by:
  - ensuring that teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan learning activities which fully meet learners' differing needs
  - ensuring that lessons are informed by clear subject-specific success criteria so that students and their teachers can evaluate securely how much progress has been made by the end of each lesson and over time
  - improving the quality of oral and written feedback so that pupils clearly understand their progress against targets and how they can improve it.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by the end of Key Stage 4, by:
  - increasing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems to drive improvements more quickly
  - using more challenging targets to promote good and outstanding achievement across the curriculum.
- Broaden sixth form provision further to ensure that the curriculum more fully meets the needs, interests and aspirations of all groups of students.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**3**

Students' attendance is above average and this reflects how much they enjoy coming to school. They particularly appreciate the quality of care and guidance they receive from staff and other students, for example during college time. Students greatly value the opportunities to mentor younger members of the school community and there is a committed and effective anti-bullying group. Students are fully involved in evaluating many aspects of the school's work such as the 'Friday focus days' and say they appreciate their role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of individual subject departments. Large numbers of students are involved in competitions and events to raise funds for charitable causes within the local and wider communities, and older students have done some outstanding work to support students from a local special school by leading visits to an outdoor recreation centre in Wales.

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Students' commitment to adopting healthy lifestyles is reflected in their keenness to participate in extra-curricular sports, their roles as junior sports leaders and their good knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy. School leaders recognise that not all students who bring packed lunches to school make healthy eating choices.

Students get on extremely well with each other and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. Their good personal development makes a significant contribution to their progress in lessons and over time. They thrive in lessons when they are given well-designed activities which enable them to work in pairs and in groups and enjoy assessing their own and each other's work. However, these opportunities are not seen often enough and in some lessons, activities are not challenging enough to inspire interest and enthusiasm. While students' behaviour is good and often outstanding in lessons, students did report that a small minority of lessons are still affected by low-level disruption. Teachers' inconsistent use of assessment to promote learning means that learners' individual needs are not always sufficiently well met, resulting in some lessons which are not challenging enough for the most able and others where support for those with additional needs is not planned carefully enough. As a result, most groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make only satisfactory progress.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have cultivated good relationships with students with the result that almost all lessons take place in a very positive learning environment. Many staff are imaginative in their use of technology to promote learning and in the best lessons, students are enthused by the wide range of teaching resources and activities which successfully stimulate high quality learning and enjoyment. In these lessons, students are challenged to think hard for themselves through well-planned teacher questioning and activities are imaginative and inspiring. All students have a clear understanding of how to make excellent progress in these lessons because graded success criteria are shared, measurable and referred to regularly. This understanding is underpinned by a clear and regular focus on students' individual subject-specific targets and strategies to help them improve. However, not enough lessons share these characteristics and half the lessons seen during the inspection secured only satisfactory progress. The key weakness is teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning, their teaching practice, and their evaluations of students' progress in developing subject-specific skills.

The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 meets students' individual needs well. Students in Key Stage 4 who prefer to study more vocational courses benefit from the school's good links with local partners which enable them to choose from a range of vocational qualifications. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is enhanced through the pastoral programme delivered through college time and through the fortnightly focused learning days for students in Year 9. These make an excellent contribution to students' future economic well-being by enabling them to engage in enterprise activities with members of the business community and to develop their personal learning and thinking skills. Provision has been enhanced through the school's status as a specialist mathematics and computing college, particularly through much-improved facilities to support the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum. The curriculum is increasingly sensitive to the needs of learners who need additional support, particularly in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, and the school is alert to modifying provision within the curriculum to help students at risk of underachieving, particularly in English and mathematics.

½ Strategies to support students with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the student support centre are excellent. As a result, the number of students subject to fixed-term exclusions has reduced rapidly, and particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students who join the school partway through their secondary education are well cared for and benefit from the school's commitment to providing personal mentoring for all students who need additional support. Systems for care, guidance and support are enhanced by good partnership working, for example through the school's work with the Connexions careers service, social services and counsellors. The school's caring ethos is exemplified through the introduction of 'mind time', which encourages all students to consider how best they can help and support each other. While pastoral support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good, school leaders recognise that systems to measure their

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starting points are not yet sufficiently refined to enable secure analysis of the progress they make in lessons and over time.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

### **How effective are leadership and management?**

Improvements to the leadership and management of teaching and learning are now resulting in good provision for teachers' professional development, although the impact of this work has yet to be fully realised in lessons. The headteacher rightly enjoys the respect of students, staff and the wider community. Systems to safeguard students are robust and meet statutory requirements, and the school's work to support the most vulnerable learners is excellent. The school is alert to its responsibilities to promote community cohesion and is developing a partnership with a school whose intake is more diverse, to increase students' understanding of the wider national community. Links with a school in Ghana effectively enhance students' understanding of the global community. As a result, students are tolerant and inquisitive about cultures other than their own and are very committed to supporting more vulnerable members of the local and wider community. The school's specialist status has been used well to support provision for mathematics and computing in primary and special schools in the local community.

All staff are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, and the academic progress and participation in wider school life of different groups of learners are increasingly well monitored. As a result, no groups are under-represented in their participation in extra-curricular opportunities, and although achievement remains satisfactory, no groups achieve less well than others. The school's work to support students with weak basic skills through family learning is highly commendable.

½ Leaders and managers, including governors, are determined to accelerate students' achievement and the overall effectiveness of the school. They recognise the areas for improvement identified by inspectors and acknowledge that improvements to key areas of improving teaching and learning and raising achievement have not been quick enough. The school knows that its determination to drive improvement must now be reflected in more ambitious target setting.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*



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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who completed the Ofsted questionnaires are supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides. A number wrote very positively about the quality of care and support their children have received in times of difficulty or in order to meet their particular emotional or academic needs. Others raised concerns about the quality of marking in students' books and inspectors agree that this is not consistent enough. A common concern was over the timing of Year 7 parents' evening, which parents feel comes too late in the academic year. Inspectors discussed this with school leaders, who had already recognised these concerns and have revised arrangements to ensure that the Year 7 parents' evening is positioned earlier in the year from September 2010 onwards.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 251 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,231 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Emmbrook School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	30	157	63	9	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	87	35	159	63	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	91	36	139	55	20	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	28	155	62	14	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	21	179	71	8	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	18	161	64	29	12	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	12	177	71	31	12	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	73	29	141	56	11	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	25	159	63	20	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	28	147	59	22	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	18	147	59	25	10	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	91	36	137	55	10	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	96	38	135	54	12	5	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



28 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Emmbrook School, Wokingham RG41 1JP

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we recently visited your school. Here are our main findings, though we hope that some of you will read the full report.

Your school has made some important strides forward in the three years since it was last inspected. For example:

- the sixth form has improved significantly and now provides a good quality of education
- the quality of care, guidance and support has improved so that you feel particularly well supported ? it was great to hear how much you value initiatives such as '½mind time' and other support you receive through the college system
- you benefit from an improved curriculum with good initiatives such as focused learning days to promote your learning, enjoyment and personal development
- you make a very good contribution to the school and wider community, for example through your roles as school councillors, mentors and sports leaders
- behaviour has improved, though some of you told us behaviour is not always as good as you would like in a small number of lessons.

Your school is satisfactory, but we have asked your teachers to accelerate your achievement so that you achieve even better exam results at the end of Key Stage 4. In order to do this, we have asked that:

- teachers ensure lessons are always challenging and fully meet the needs of everyone in the class
- teachers use clear subject-specific success criteria to help you really understand how much progress you have made in lessons and over time
- marking is more consistently good so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve.

We have also asked the school to ensure that the range of courses offered in the sixth form meet everybody's needs, interests and aspirations. We also want leaders to further improve monitoring and evaluation systems and use more challenging targets to improve your achievement. You can help the school continue to improve by exhibiting

your usually outstanding behaviour in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton Her Majesty's Inspector

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