

# William de Ferrers School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115343
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338571
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Bob Drew

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1919
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anthony Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Russell Ayling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Trinity Square South Woodham Ferrers Essex
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 326326
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<b>Email address</b>	mainoffice@williamdeferrers.essex.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-evaluation form, its major policy documents and monitoring records and analysed just over 300 parental questionnaires.

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

- whether results and current performance in lessons indicate above average attainment and good achievement or high attainment and outstanding achievement
- how much the sixth form has improved since the last inspection and how this has been achieved
- whether data suggesting underperformance by lower attaining students could be explained
- how far extensive changes to the Key Stage 3 and 4 curriculum are affecting students' experience of school.

## Information about the school

William de Ferrers is a very large school set in the centre of the town it serves. The overwhelming majority of its students are White British. Very small numbers are from several minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few students use English as an additional language and none is at an early stage of acquiring spoken English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. The school has been a specialist sports college for some time and recently added specialist status for mathematics and computing. It holds the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards.

**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?**

**2**

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

**1**

### Main findings

This school is already good. It has some outstanding features and has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

The school's ability to improve is seen in the way sixth-form standards have been raised and in the imaginative changes to the curriculum and management structures that prompted these improvements. It is also evident in the way staff, students and parents talk about the sports college role and its revitalised impact on the school and community. Major changes to provision for Key Stages 3 and 4 also indicate successful planning and good implementation, though the process is not yet complete. Already, however, Year 10 and 11 students are finding their needs more effectively met and their attitudes to the curriculum are highly positive, with a growing number seeing a more obvious route from Key Stage 4 to the sixth form.

These improvements stem principally from the school's very effective and relatively new senior leadership team. The headteacher gives this team, and the school as a whole, untiring leadership, clear vision and a sense of immense pride. Governors also make an excellent contribution. Currently, subject leaders make a satisfactory but improving impact. Some are already good. There is inconsistency in how teaching quality in their departments is assessed, but mentoring by senior leaders is rapidly minimising this issue.

Standards are above average - considerably so - at the end of Key Stage 4, and achievement is good. The school's self-evaluation of these aspects as 'high' and 'outstanding' has an understandable logic, but they do not exceed national norms sufficiently to be ranked with the highest category nationally. This is confirmed by the progress seen in lessons, which is typically good rather than outstanding. Teaching, while also improved, still has scope for further enhancement and with it the achievement of all students. Lessons are well planned, have very positive relationships and excellent subject expertise. Only a minority, however, have the fast pace, central role for student participation and regular challenge for the most able that characterise outstanding teaching.

The school has designed a very imaginative and appropriate curriculum which is having a good impact on standards. Provision is greatly enhanced by extra-curricular activities, especially in sport. A major success is the personal development of its students. Through excellent care, guidance and support systems, students show confidence, feel safe in school, enjoy learning and, above all, make an outstanding contribution. For instance, the junior 'sports leader' concept has been extended into all subjects so that great numbers of young leaders now support primary classes across the town, help in

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lessons in their own school and have become indispensable to staff.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and convert more satisfactory teaching into good, by:
  - ensuring that the school consistently judges teaching by the progress all students make in lessons
  - making lively pace, heavy involvement of students and a close match between tasks and the ability range of students features of all lessons, not just the best ones
  - giving subject leaders greater scope for monitoring lesson quality.

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

<b>2</b>
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Because teaching is good and students show a strong commitment to learning, attainment is well above average by the end of Key Stage 4. While they enter Year 7 with above-average scores, when they leave, students exceed national averages by a much wider margin. This amounts to good achievement across Key Stages 3 and 4. In some areas, including English and mathematics, long-term progress is particularly good. The standard of work seen in lessons is above average: many students show a perceptive grasp of ideas and concepts and a willingness to investigate in depth. Sometimes, but not consistently so, the most able cover alternative, challenging, work set early in the lesson. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well because they have carefully planned support. Generally, progress in lessons is good. Targets are sufficiently challenging to promote above-average standards, but are less ambitious than they might be if outstanding achievement is being sought.

Students' personal qualities also develop well, with some features being outstanding. While this is a tribute to the students and their families, it also reflects the excellent care, guidance and support provided, which enables them to feel safe and makes them aware of strategies for ensuring personal safety. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted, especially through sports provision. Behaviour is good. In many instances, attitudes and conduct are excellent and this contributes to the students' sense of safety in such a large, sometimes crowded school. Above-average attendance confirms students' positive attitudes and the enjoyment they show in the great majority of lessons. Many avenues exist for them to contribute to the life of the school and local community and their response is outstanding. Large numbers are involved in helping in lessons, events and clubs linked to sports college status. 'Young leadership' now operates in many other subjects as well, so that students regularly support local primary schools and other students in their own school on a huge scale. These activities, as well as academic skills and projects focused on team-building or work-place information and communication technology (ICT) skills; help ensure excellent preparation for future economic

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well-being.

Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students are reflective and very much capable of empathy with the suffering of others. Their moral and social awareness is evident in their responsible attitudes and desire to contribute. Some valuable actions are taken by the school to counter the lack of cultural variety in the immediate environment.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</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>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in the great majority of lessons. Occasionally, it is outstanding and in about a third of lessons, it is satisfactory. The constant features within teaching are that relationships are good, staff show impressive subject knowledge and communication skills, and students work hard. What sets the very best lessons apart is the high degree of practical participation by students, where they are constantly asked to demonstrate their understanding, or present to the class, debate in groups, evaluate the work of others or act out a concept. There is no place for passive listening. In such a context, they also feel free to admit lack of understanding or limited skills and know they will be

<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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helped. Some of these lessons proceed at a remarkably fast pace, so that fresh directions and activities keep opening up well before the students' interest can wane. The best have work for the full ability range, with expectations set out at the beginning of the lesson. Together, these features lead to outstanding progress, but they are rarely all present in lessons. Where teaching is satisfactory, the pace is steady and active involvement is limited. Good lessons are generally well paced with students actively involved, but with adequate rather than extensive scope for work matched to pupils' different learning needs.

The school has been reworking its curriculum during the last two years, opening up a much wider range of routes through Key Stages 3 and 4. While the full impact of this cannot yet be judged, the match to students' needs is good and improving. Motivation and enjoyment are high in the new courses and interim results in those with ongoing assessment are high. The logic behind the planning and its implementation, thus far, are both excellent.

One of the school's most successful areas is its care, guidance and support arrangements. These provide good safeguarding and child-protection systems, positive and clear direction about expectations on behaviour and a very effective steer on how to contribute to school life. Careers guidance leaves students feeling well prepared for sixth form, work or college. Systems for encouraging high attendance are very effective. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families receive excellent support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<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>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The school's senior leadership has been reshaped in the last two years. The relatively new headteacher's immediate impact has been to create a dynamic team, gain strong support from staff, parents and students and set a series of key initiatives in motion. Some of these have already had a major impact, for instance, in raising standards in the sixth form and reinvigorating the sports college role. The full effect of others, such as curriculum changes in the main school, has still to be felt. Governors play an unusually pro-active part in identifying the school's needs and taking steps to meet them. Several key changes reflect their initiative and influence on senior managers. Leadership of subjects is more variable and there is some inconsistency in the way teaching is evaluated by different subject heads. Nevertheless, leadership has shown it can

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transform provision, improve students' engagement in learning and raise standards. Its ability to do so is being strengthened by training and the embedding of new programmes so that the capacity for further improvement is excellent.

There is outstanding support from parents and highly effective collaboration with local primary schools and other education and business partners. Discrimination is countered well by an uncompromising policy of zero-tolerance of all incidents. The location within the town centre has always prompted much greater vigilance than usual in monitoring students' safety and avoiding unauthorised entry to the school. Impact on community cohesion is very good locally and good at a national and global level. There are in-depth links with communities abroad which are sometimes extended into themes, but the systematic approach to global issues of poverty or religious diversity is limited.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>

**Sixth form**

The sixth form has seen major improvement since the previous inspection. For some time, added-value in the sixth form had been negative, but standards have risen significantly so that they are now above average and indicative of good progress across Years 12 and 13. Students' attendance and attitudes have improved noticeably. A new curriculum is in place, offering attractive courses for a wide range of students, enhanced by an extremely rich programme of sport and school or community service. Teaching is good. Staff and students relate well and the subject expertise of staff is highly respected. The degree to which new ways of learning have been adopted, especially the participation of students and the need for tasks to match the ability range, still varies.



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This limits the proportion of outstanding teaching and excellent progress.

The key changes have been initiated by fresh structures in leadership. Each year has its own leader managing day-to-day procedures, allowing the director of sixth form proper scope for broader leadership, for instance, liaising with subject leaders and ensuring excellent data monitoring by all sixth form staff. Leadership in the sixth form is tied closely to the senior leadership of the school as a whole. The overall impact of leadership here is excellent.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

**Views of parents and carers**

Parents are extremely supportive of the school. Their questionnaire returns indicate very strong approval for all aspects of its work. They are especially pleased with the progress their children make, the fact that they are safe at school and their enjoyment of school life. They rate teaching quality and communication with the school very highly. Parents strongly approve of the way children with specific needs are supported and they believe the school is effectively managed. A small minority feel more could be done to:

- guide them in supporting their children's learning at home
- deal with unacceptable behaviour, and
- promote healthy lifestyles.

Inspectors judge that parents are right to have faith in the school. In all areas covered by the questionnaire, including those with scope for improvement, the school's current performance is already good.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William de Ferrers 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. The inspection team received 309 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1919 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	104	34	189	61	15	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	105	34	187	61	14	5	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	92	31	188	62	21	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	105	35	183	60	15	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	84	28	208	69	9	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	23	202	67	30	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	23	201	66	34	11	0	0
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)	88	30	191	66	8	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	82	27	206	68	11	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	29	180	61	23	8	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	19	205	72	20	7	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	103	34	187	62	9	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	132	43	165	53	10	3	2	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.**



14 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of William de Ferrers School, South Woodham Ferrers, CM3 5JU

Thank you for the way you made us welcome when my inspection team visited your school. We were especially grateful to those of you who gave up time to speak with us and to show us round. We think you and your parents are right to be pleased with the school. It is giving you a good education, it already does some things extremely well and it is improving. We were especially pleased with:

- the way sports college status contributes to school life as a whole
- the quality of leadership from the senior team
- your contribution to the school and wider community
- the quality of the school's care and guidance for you
- the leadership and management of the sixth form
- the preparation for work and future economic well-being the school gives you
- the impact of the governing body
- the strong support the school receives from your parents
- its successful links with local schools, colleges and other partners, so it can offer you a wider range of opportunities than it could manage on its own
- the way the school is committed to constantly improving and the skill it shows in doing this.

If the school is to carry on improving, it needs to take teaching that is already good and develop the features that make it outstanding. Where teaching is satisfactory, this needs to be transformed into good practice. In both cases, there needs to be much more of what we saw in the school's very best lessons: remarkably lively pace, extensive, active involvement of students and consistent provision of challenging work for able students.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at William de Ferrers.

Yours faithfully

Bob Drew

Lead inspector

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