

The Magna Carta School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125258
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340748
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Frater HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Philip White
Headteacher	Mr Tim Smith
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2007
School address	Thorpe Road Staines Middlesex TW18 3HJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Over 60% of the time was spent looking at learning; 48 lessons were observed; 45 teachers were observed and feedback was given to individual teachers; and meetings were held with parents, groups of students, the chair of governors, staff and representatives from a range of educational partnerships. Inspectors observed the school's work, including students' exercise books, and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the local authority school improvement partner's reports, the school's own record of teaching observations, students' performance targets, data on students' progress, attendance and behaviour, and a range of documents relating to safeguarding students. In addition, they looked at questionnaires completed by staff, students and parents and carers. In total, 188 questionnaires were completed by parents and carers.

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

- achievement in subjects and of different groups of students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- students' behaviour
- teachers' use of challenging targets, assessment and marking
- consistency of achievement across subjects.

Information about the school

The Magna Carta School is larger than most secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that in most schools, as are the proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational needs, is above average. Their needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulty, moderate learning difficulty and speech, language and communication. More students than in most schools join or leave the school other than at the usual time. The school gained specialist status in technology (technology, science and mathematics) in September 2001. It has several awards: the Healthy Schools award, Artsmark (Silver), Sportsmark (Gold), Eco-Schools and Investors in People.

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

2

Main findings

The Magna Carta School is a good and improving school. Standards of attainment have risen over the past three years and students achieve well. Students' attendance and behaviour have also improved, and are good. Key to this success is the introduction of rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the academic progress, personal development and well-being of each student. Well-targeted intervention strategies and outstanding care, guidance and support enable students to meet and exceed their targets, including targets in the school's specialist subjects, although the targets are not now challenging enough. Procedures for safeguarding students are outstanding. Students enjoy their education and make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. For example, over 200 students engage in community service through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The good curriculum is constantly reviewed to meet the needs of all students. It provides an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and visits. It is enhanced further by the school's work with an extensive range of partners. Partnership work is outstanding in providing continuity and progression in the students' education through strong links with local primary schools, colleges of further education and a university. As a result, students' aspirations are rising. Vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and effective support, including external support and teaching assistants, is provided for those with learning difficulties. The needs of those with behavioural difficulties, however, are not met consistently in lessons.

In the majority of lessons, the quality of teaching and students' learning and progress are good. In the minority of lessons, teachers make insufficient use of challenging targets and assessment to match lessons to the needs of all students. Students know their target levels and grades, but do not always know how to improve their work as the quality of feedback and marking is inconsistent. Features of good lessons include opportunities for students to apply their learning independently. In the minority of lessons, insufficient opportunities for practical application of skills are provided to engage all students and particularly those with behavioural difficulties. In a very small minority of lessons, unsatisfactory behaviour disrupts learning. Good procedures for monitoring and evaluating lessons, which involve subject as well as senior leaders, are resulting in improvements in teaching, learning and progress. The legacy of high staff turnover has resulted in a slow rate of progress. However, given the improvements made, the school's accurate self-evaluation and relevant priorities in improvement planning, leadership and management at all levels demonstrate good capacity to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement for all students, and particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
 - ensuring teachers use challenging targets and assessment consistently to match lessons to the needs of all students
 - identifying for students what they need to do to improve their work in each subject
 - ensuring all lessons engage students in applying skills independently, for example skills in investigating, problem solving, discussing views and presenting research findings.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Due to the improving trend in attainment over the past three years standards are above average, though in some subjects they are higher than in others. In 2009, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics was well above average and exceeded the school's target. . The targets set by the school, however, are insufficiently challenging to raise attainment consistently across all subjects. Achievement was satisfactory for most students, with no significant difference by gender or ethnicity. The achievement of the majority of students on the special needs register was satisfactory or good but for a minority of students with behavioural issues it was inadequate, due to an inappropriate match of courses, teaching and learning. As a result of improvements in the quality of teaching and curriculum, the attainment and progress of current students are now good overall in lessons and the achievement of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory.

Students enjoy their learning in the majority of lessons, as evident in their positive attitudes and in their completed questionnaires. In discussions, they said they particularly enjoy lessons that challenge them to think, and gave science and AS level mathematics as examples of where they engage in practical investigations and problem solving. They make rapid progress in lessons that engage them in applying independent skills at their own level and pace. For example, in an art lesson, Year 11 students presented their work to the class and made connections between their own ideas and techniques and those of artists they have studied. Good practice in the arts is recognised in the Artsmark award. In an Italian lesson, Year 7 students enjoyed competing against each other in groups to recall numbers, using the interactive whiteboard to demonstrate different times on a clock face and asking their partners in Italian to draw various times of the day. By asking challenging questions in role play in a history lesson, students extended each other's understanding of the consequences of battles. In the minority of lessons, progress is slow as all students work at the same level and pace with limited opportunities to apply independent learning skills.

Students say they feel safe and that the few bullying and behaviour incidents that occur

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are addressed well by the school. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. It creates a positive ethos for learning. Students have a good understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles and a high proportion engage in the extensive range of sports on offer, as acknowledged in the Sportsmark and Healthy School awards. They say they would like more health education. In making an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, students eagerly accept responsibility, for example as house captains, peer mentors to younger students, librarians and members of the school council. They work with pupils in primary schools, young physically disabled people and elderly residents, in addition to carrying out community service. They take responsibility for their environment, as demonstrated in the Eco-Schools award. Through these activities, the students develop good leadership and social skills. They also develop good skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT). These skills, together with their above average levels of attendance and programmes such as the Year 9 'preparation for working life', prepare students well for their future education and employment.

Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development includes discussion of moral issues, engaging well with each other in lessons and learning about cultures other than their own, for example in raising funds for orphanages in Africa. Students engage in a range of cultural activities, such as musical and dramatic productions, and visits to places of interest. In religious education, they reflect deeply on their own and others' experiences and shared values, but this practice is not embedded across all subjects.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

¹ 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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good in the majority of lessons and leads to good learning and progress. In the few outstanding lessons, all students are challenged to make rapid progress. The questionnaires returned by staff are positive about the school and show they appreciate the opportunities for continuing professional development, as acknowledged in the Investors in People award. Strengths in teaching include good subject knowledge and lesson plans that lead students through a clear sequence of tasks to the learning objectives. Most teachers support students' independent work effectively by modelling the skills to be applied. They use questioning well to check and extend students' understanding. Relationships are positive and encourage students to contribute to lessons. In a minority of lessons, progress is satisfactory rather than good. This is because the teacher does not use challenging targets and assessment to set tasks at appropriate levels to meet the differing needs of students, particularly the more able and less able. In such lessons there is insufficient variety to sustain the students' interest, particularly those with behavioural difficulties. While students know their targets, they do not always get information about the skills they have to master to reach them.

The curriculum provides good breadth and balance. Recent innovative improvements ensure that it is tailored to the needs of individuals and groups of students and promotes their good outcomes. A good range of qualifications is offered from AS mathematics to National Vocational Qualification entry level building and hairdressing. The range of vocational courses is expanding well, for example with BTEC construction and diplomas in ICT and creative and media arts. The positive impact of students starting their GCSE courses in Year 9 can be seen in their improved behaviour and attendance, and increased enjoyment. This is enhanced further by the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities and visits on offer. Specialist status has increased the use of technology, such as interactive whiteboards, across subjects and raised attainment within the specialist subjects. Good practice in teaching, for example in science, has not yet been disseminated across the school.

Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Through monitoring students' personal development and well-being, the school knows individuals and their families well and, in liaison with a range of external providers, meets their needs very effectively. The impact of this work, together with a very effective mentoring programme, is seen in the improving attendance and behaviour and the rising trend in attainment. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance for students, particularly in relation to transition from primary school and into GCSE

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courses, are exemplary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's vision of success for each student is shared by the whole school. The headteacher and senior leadership team are driving improvements through the school development plan. Through accurate self-evaluation they identify relevant priorities for improvement, including the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are developing appropriate skills in monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and progress. Their impact in this area has been slow due to the high turnover in staff, but improvements are evident and contributing to the rising trend in attainment. The school has acknowledged the need to set more challenging targets in order to sustain the overall improvements and to close the gaps in attainment between subjects.

The governing body is effective in challenging the school, for example to ensure predicted GCSE grades for subjects are accurate, and in providing support such as staff recruitment. The school engages well with parents and carers. In discussion, parents said they appreciate the opportunity to express their views in the parents' forums. They also value the range of communication with the school, particularly the personalised postcards praising their children's achievement and the parent portal on the website. The school's outstanding work with its partners contributes significantly to its good promotion of equal opportunity and tackling discrimination. The impact is evident in the improving outcomes and the fact that there is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of students, except those with behavioural difficulty. The school is reviewing appropriately the curriculum to meet the needs of these students.

An excellent level of training in safeguarding students ensures staff and governors adopt robust procedures, including procedures for checking the suitability of staff. Outstanding attention is given to all aspects of students' safety, for example on off-site visits and when using the internet. The school promotes community cohesion well. It has a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of its community in a local and global context, though less so at national level. This has been gained through its effective partnership work and in supporting charities such as African orphanages. The school has planned appropriate actions to strengthen support for local children and families. While it is evident that students from different backgrounds get on

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noticeably well with each other, the school is not yet monitoring the impact of its work in the school or community. The school deploys its resources to achieve good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires indicate that most parents and carers are happy with the work of the school. Parents and carers agree that their children are safe. In discussion, they said the school knows their children as individuals and it provides a curriculum to meet their differing needs. A parent wrote, 'The pastoral support and degree of care for the individual is wonderful.' A few parents and carers expressed concerns about students' behaviour and instability in staffing. Inspectors found that behaviour has improved and is generally good. A very small minority of lessons are disrupted by unsatisfactory behaviour because they fail to engage the students fully in the learning tasks. Staffing is becoming more stable.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Magna Carta 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 188 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	27	120	64	14	7	9	2
The school keeps my child safe	50	27	126	67	8	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	20	119	63	23	12	5	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	21	154	66	18	10	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	30	16	134	71	14	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	13	125	66	24	13	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	9	130	69	24	13	3	2
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)	34	18	123	65	13	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	21	123	64	15	8	6	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	22	103	55	19	10	15	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	14	116	62	18	10	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	59	31	112	60	5	3	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	25	117	62	12	6	5	3

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Magna Carta School, Staines TW18 3HJ

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by talking to the inspectors and, for some of you, completing questionnaires. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. The following is a list of some of the things we found out.

- Your school is a good school.
- It helps you to make good progress in the majority of your lessons and you attain above average standards in many of your subjects.
- Those of you who find it difficult to manage your behaviour do not make as much progress as others.
- You feel safe in school because your teachers deal with bullying well.
- You would like more health education.
- You enjoy all the clubs on offer, and most of you participate in extra sport.
- You say behaviour has improved and it is now good most of the time.
- Your attendance has improved and is better than in most schools.
- You make an outstanding contribution to your school and the community.
- Your school prepares you well for your future education and employment.
- Teaching has improved and it is good in the majority of lessons.
- Some of you were concerned about having a lot of different teachers, but this situation is now getting better .
- You have a good range of subject options to meet your interests.
- Your school provides excellent care, guidance and support for you.
- Your headteacher and his senior staff lead and manage the school well.

To help you achieve even better results, we have asked your headteacher to:

- help your teachers to use challenging targets and assessments to make sure lessons are not too easy or too difficult for you
- help you to know how to improve your work
- make sure all your lessons are interesting and give you opportunities to apply skills independently, such as investigating, problem solving and discussing your views.

You can help by monitoring your own progress towards your targets and by asking your teachers what you need to do to reach them. We wish you every success in your

studies.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater

Her Majesty's Inspector

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