

Farnham Heath End School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125248
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	315211
Inspection date	8 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	893
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jenny Spencer
Headteacher	Mr David C Hoggins
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2005
School address	Hale Reeds Farnham GU9 9BN
Telephone number	01252 733371
Fax number	01252 712999

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How effectively is students' achievement evaluated and monitored across subjects?
- How effective are leadership and management at all levels in ensuring the students' maximum progress?
- How well the school's mathematics and computing specialism assists in raising standards?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation (SEF), by observing lessons, scrutinising the school's records of students' standards and achievement and other documentation, and by discussions with students and staff. Parents' responses to questionnaires also informed judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the SEF, were other than justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Farnham Heath End School, a specialist mathematics and computing college, serves a very diverse socio-economic area. Most students live locally although an increasing number travel from an adjacent county. Students are predominantly of White European heritage but the school population also includes small numbers from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Very few are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is low but the percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to national figures. The school has met the standards for a number of awards, including Sportsmark and the International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Farnham Heath End is a good and improving school. It increasingly effectively fulfils its aim of 'equipping all students with the skills, attitudes, knowledge and confidence' to achieve a 'fulfilling place in society'. The overwhelming majority of parents endorse this judgement and consider that this successful mathematics and computing college does well by its students. A real strength of the school is the way it strives to involve all parents, including hard to reach groups, in the life of the school. 'My children enjoy school, have achieved much and I feel it was the best choice out of all schools in the area' commented one. Students, too, consider it is a good place to be. 'Teachers put themselves out for us' reported the school council. These views reflect the school's own evaluation of its provision. Since the last inspection, the school has sustained the students' good personal development, maintained success in GCSE examinations and effectively provided for students' care, guidance and support. Despite significant staffing challenges, training activities have improved classroom practice because of the strong culture of self-evaluation that pervades all sectors of the school. Senior managers' determination to grasp difficult issues underpins the school's strong capacity to improve further.

The school is rightly proud of its inclusive curriculum that enables students to find a suitable pathway through Years 10 and 11 and enables the overwhelming majority to move on to worthwhile work or further training and education. The school has used its well-established links with other local schools and colleges so that individual's needs are met. Students' successes, however, in alternative forms of accreditation are not always reflected in the published examination results. For example, a significant number of older students regularly benefit from college courses involving work experience options. As a result, over four years, all but one has continued with education beyond Year 11. Vulnerable but able students follow personalised timetables so that their social and emotional needs are met as well as their academic development. This good personal and academic guidance is reflected in the students' regular attendance, positive attitudes to learning, co-operative behaviour, and in their enjoyment of school. 'We are a tightly knit community' said a Year 11 student.

The students' good spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is clear in their concern for each other, their willingness to listen to opposing opinion, and in their recognition of, and interest in, traditions other than their own. Students are really keen, for example, on their links with a South African School. Sharing dance forms with them is a favourite activity. Relationships throughout the school are very positive. A real strength of the school is the way it involves students in decision-making through opportunities such as the active school council, the student surveys and house activities. 'This school really listens to us' a group reported. Participation in out-of-hours opportunities is high, with over half of the students involved in more than one sport. The mathematics and computing specialism enables students to experience exciting opportunities such as 'Enigma Week' and a vast range of computing clubs. Besides their interest in keeping fit, students also know about healthy eating, take advantage of the 'drop-in with the school nurse', and know about keeping safe both in and out of school. Students convincingly reported that they always had somebody in school to turn to when needed. Many students are proud to make a difference to others. They act as prefects, support Year 7 readers, contribute to mathematics master classes for primary schools and even give Spanish lessons to younger pupils. They are pleased with the vertical tutor groups and 'look out for each other' throughout the school day. Through drama, musical events, organising opportunities for local

residents and raising funds for charities at home and abroad, they contribute well to the wider community.

Students report that they are well prepared for the next stage of education, training or work. Most students asked were very well informed on their progress towards their personal and academic targets. Students regularly reach above average standards in Year 11 examinations and mostly achieve well. A well- above average proportion of the current Year 11 are set to gain five or more A* to C GCSE grades that include English and mathematics. Over three quarters of the cohort have already achieved a higher grade in information and communications technology (ICT) and more than half are already successful in mathematics, modern foreign languages and citizenship examinations. Those students taking vocational courses such as countryside and environment have also achieved well. The school is keenly aware, however, that students' progress varies across subjects and years and that more challenging target setting should inform the expectations of all staff. In mathematics and ICT, for example, students achieve consistently well, reflecting the school's specialist status. Staffing challenges have hindered students' progress in technology.

In Years 7 to 9, students' progress, although satisfactory, is slower than that in Years 10 and 11. This is because the school has had a sharper focus on examination groups than on younger students, particularly Year 8. Senior leaders now recognise that they need to do more to adapt the curriculum to meet better the needs of these students and to encouraging greater independence in learning. The school's records show that the proportion of good teaching and learning identified from regular observations is highest in examination classes. As a result, students' progress accelerates as they go through the school.

Senior leaders are untiring in their work to develop in all staff a culture that puts students as learners at the heart of the school, a sentiment reflected in the school's training opportunities for staff. Managers regularly try to ensure that the best practice in very successful subjects is shared across the curriculum. For example, recent robust action has made a difference in science and the impact is already evident in modular results this year with close to 70% of students at grade C or better. Teaching and learning are good overall. Warm working relationships, purposeful activities and a good pace characterise lessons. Underlying reasons for underachievement are explored carefully. The small number of students from minority, ethnic heritages achieves as well as others. Vulnerable students fare particularly well, especially those who are looked after and those with speech, language and communication difficulties.

Good senior leadership and management are well complemented by the increasing number of middle managers who oversee their areas of responsibility rigorously and provide sound leadership for their staff. They are well supported by the strong culture of self-evaluation that pervades the school. Mathematics and computing are especially well led and this is reflected in students' well above average standards. Both subject areas are real drivers of improvement, particularly in developing the quality of teaching and assessment across the school. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive but challenge the school's improvement strategies rigorously. 'We are not into rubber stamping' noted the chair.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the expectations of all staff are informed by sufficiently challenging targets.
- Sharpen the school's focus on the progress of students in Years 7 and 8 and encourage their independence as learners.

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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?	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Farnham Heath End School, Farnham, GU9 9BN

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly to Farnham Heath End. Thank you especially to those of you who took the time for some extended conversations with me. I am sure you will want to know my findings.

You are rightly proud of your school. You think it is a good school and I agree with you. Your able headteacher and staff want the best for you and are determined that you will make fast progress over your time in the school. You make a positive contribution to this ambition. Because you enjoy school, you behave well, attend regularly and usually work hard. You make good progress by Year 11 and reach standards that are above national figures. This is because you are taught well and are very well looked after. You recognise that teachers are always there to help you and that you get really good guidance and support both in learning pathways and for your personal needs.

Many of you make a real difference to others through your charity fund raising and through your work with your partner South African school. You also take your school responsibilities seriously in your work as prefects, house leaders and as reading buddies for Year 7. We are pleased that you are so comfortable with each other and show such good will to those around you.

When thinking about how Farnham Heath End could be even better, I have asked your teachers to make sure that they always set very challenging targets for you to strive after. You identified that Year 8 was the least exciting year in the school. So, I have also asked your teachers to look into how students could make faster progress in Years 7 and 8 and how they can encourage younger students to become more independent learners.

For your part, you can continue to help Farnham Heath improve by working as hard as you possibly can and by continuing your collaborative working with your teachers.

With every best wish for your future success.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector