

# Therfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	125252
<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	315212
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ramesh Kapadia HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1359
6th form	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs C Curran
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs S Willman
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Dilston Road Leatherhead KT22 7NZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01372 818123
<b>Fax number</b>	01372 818124

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of four Additional Inspectors, led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

## Description of the school

This large school, with more boys than girls, serves a relatively affluent area, with few students entitled to free school meals, though there are also some pockets of deprivation. The sixth form is also large and offers mainly advanced level courses. There is a specialist speech, language and communication unit and a high proportion of students with learning difficulties/disabilities or a statement of special educational needs. The students are mainly British White, with small numbers from other communities. The school acquired specialist status as a sports college in 2005, with a second specialism in modern foreign languages.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Therfield School provides outstanding care, support and guidance for its students who attain standards which are above average. Students' progress from Key Stage 2 is good up to Key Stage 4 and beyond into the sixth form. Overall effectiveness is good, in line with the school's own careful self-evaluation.

Attainment at GCSE has been significantly above average on most measures for the last few years. A high percentage of students achieve five or more higher GCSE grades, including English, mathematics and science; almost all students have achieved at least five or more graded results over the last few years. Teaching and learning are good, but the system of monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous. The curriculum is good and appropriately balanced, with increasingly innovative vocational provision in the main school. Attendance has improved this year to a satisfactory level and students behave well.

Personal development and well-being are good, supported by outstanding provision to promote health, through the school's specialist status. The school has taken a lead in the Mid Surrey Sports Partnership. Links with parents are good and the school recognises the need to involve them more fully in future developments. The support for vulnerable students is particularly effective.

The new headteacher and her large cohesive leadership team, supported by a new chair of governors, have an exciting vision to enable the school to continue serving its community effectively. An overall school development plan is well supported by detailed action plans. Areas of weakness from the previous inspection have been addressed, pointing to good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and has some outstanding features. Students achieve well in relation to their starting points in Year 7, leaving with results at GCE advanced level that are consistently above the local and national averages. This is confirmed by value-added information collated by the school to show progress from Year 7 to Year 13 and on to higher education.

The courses which are offered are mainly at advanced level, with limited vocational provision currently, an aspect for further development in collaboration with local providers. The curriculum meets the needs of students well, with the addition of aspects such as key skills and critical thinking. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are very popular with students; service to the community is also an important objective. As a result, students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Parents highlighted the exceptional quality of the care, guidance and support offered to students, making comments that the sixth form 'enhances students' experience of education' and that 'they have such fun'. The sixth form is well managed by a dedicated and committed team, who have the welfare of students as their central aim.

Recruitment and retention rates in the sixth form are good, with high numbers of students who gain their first choice of university, including the Russell group of high performing universities.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the school, thereby providing a clearer strategic overview.

- Continue working on attendance to sustain the improvements made this year.
- Enhance links with parents and carers so that they can take a more active part in shaping future developments in the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students come to the school with attainment which is above the national average and make good progress so that standards at GCSE are well above the national average on most measures. Results at Key Stage 3 have fluctuated but are also mostly above average.

In English, mathematics and science a significantly high percentage of students attain the highest GCSE grades of A/A\*; over 95% also attain a graded result in the core subjects. The average point score has been consistently above average for a number of years. Most of the contextual value-added scores have been rising over the last few years; there has been a dip in 2007, but there is evidence that these unvalidated figures may not be entirely accurate. Different groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or a statement of special educational need, perform well. The school has set challenging targets for 2008 which, according to current projections, are likely to be achieved.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. In the last two years the attendance rate has been below the national average but has significantly improved this year because of the systems put in place, and is now above the national average. Further work with parents, supported by form and house tutors would help embed these improvements. Students' attitudes to learning are good. Students participate well in lessons and work effectively in pairs and groups. They feel safe in the school, and report that bullying is rare and always quickly dealt with if it does occur. They are strongly encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, underpinned by two hours of physical education (PE) and participating well in the excellent range of sports clubs and physical activities. A small number of parents noted that behaviour is an issue in some lessons, but this was not observed to be the case during the inspection. Students' spiritual, moral, and social development is good. Cultural development is strong and a large number of students are involved in the many opportunities for musical, dance and theatrical activities. Appreciation of other cultures is well promoted and sometimes stems from aspects of the curriculum, as happened in a textile class where students studied Indian patterns.

Students make a very strong contribution to the community. Within the school, the student councils and house system allow many students to assume responsibilities, work with others and voice concerns. Year 9 mentors help the new Year 7 students settle, and sixth formers provide 'ASK', a counselling service for younger students. The sports college status has provided marvellous opportunities for many students at each key stage to become assistants initially and progress as sports leaders, by becoming coaches in local primary schools and a local special school. Students contribute well to the community beyond the locality, for example, regular charity fund-raising provides financial support for a school in Africa. They are well prepared

for their future economic well-being, equipping them well for their future lives within the world of work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons seen were good and some have outstanding qualities. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of students and provide appropriate challenge; this is an improvement suggested at the last inspection. Teachers generally demonstrate secure knowledge of their subjects. Systematic and regular assessment enables teachers to maintain a clear picture of students' achievements and help them progress towards their targets. Some instances of self-assessment and peer assessment were observed in lessons.

Students participate well in lessons and work productively together. For example, a large class of Year 9 students made very good progress in their understanding and performance of samba music by working together on their percussion patterns in small groups and then performing very effectively together as a whole class. Sixth form students noted that in lessons they remember best, teachers encourage them to 'think outside the box'. Although satisfactory, some lessons do not have a strong emphasis on the underlying rationale for teaching specific topics. Teachers usually use a good range of strategies to involve students so that a good pace can be maintained. The school has set up arrangements to help teachers share best practice and a clear set of guidelines has been established to help teachers secure the proper conditions for learning.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 covers all the required subjects and citizenship education well. The school is planning further improvements in its provision in Year 7 to enhance the transition from the many primary schools students come from. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has seen many positive changes. The good variety of academic subjects and growing number of vocational courses are well matched to the wide range of students' interests, abilities and aspirations. A strong emphasis on work experience and developing enterprise skills make a good contribution to students' economic well being.

Extra curricular provision is first class. The wide ranging clubs, productions, visits and sporting activities offer something for everyone to enjoy and develop new interests and skills. For example, many students achieve great success in the extremely popular 'Duke of Edinburgh award scheme' and the under 18 girls were all England football champions last year. Students of all ages learn to be safe, healthy and caring through the effective personal, social and health education programme.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding. The school takes considerable care to ensure that students feel safe and well cared for. The required checks are efficiently carried out on adults who work in the school. The academic and pastoral needs of all groups of students are successfully met.

Progress is rigorously monitored: students are kept very well informed about how well they are doing. Students' work is carefully assessed, for example according to examination criteria, and teachers provide helpful guidance on how to improve. Strategies to continue to raise achievement are in place and understood by all staff. These are linked to varied needs such as classes for students on a borderline grade or mentoring those who are at risk of failing. There is high-quality guidance on progression routes.

The Speech, Language and Communication unit within the school is a centre of excellence. Vulnerable students are exceptionally well catered for by adults who know and understand their needs. Teachers and learning support assistants provide effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, successfully challenging them to make good progress.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has set a clear vision which is shared by a collaborative senior leadership team and understood by staff. The school has systematic processes for evaluating strengths and weaknesses. Development planning is clear and appropriately detailed, with a strong focus on achievement in the context of an inclusive comprehensive school.

There are procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching, but the leadership team are still developing these in order to provide a rigorous and systematic analysis across the school. Where areas for improvement have been identified and intervention has been necessary, it has been accompanied by support for individual teachers. There are also plans to enable teaching approaches used in the best lessons to be utilised across the whole school. Good arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are clearly linked to the school improvement plan.

Well-informed governors are supportive but also prepared to ask questions such as about the rigour of self-evaluation. There are plans to engage parents more actively in the school's development; this will help to assuage concerns from a small number of parents in the parental questionnaires, the majority of which are supportive of the school.

Efficient use is made of resources and the school provides good value for money. Good progress has been made in addressing the areas for improvement in the last inspection report. The school's specialist status as a sports college has led to considerable development in the range of opportunities for students after school. There is a clear focus on developing students' leadership skills and strengthening links with community organisations.

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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	16-19
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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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	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	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**

11 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Therfield School, Leatherhead, KT22 7NZ

Many thanks for the welcome you gave us to your school. We enjoyed our discussions with you in meetings, in lessons and around the school. You are friendly and polite.

Therfield is a good school. The standards are above average across the school. You are very well cared for and links with the community are very good, especially through the school's status as a specialist sports college. The teachers work hard to make sure you make good progress. Most of you work hard and teachers are well aware of your capabilities. They use this information very well in most lessons and often provide extra support and encouragement to help you after lessons. Your behaviour in lessons is good. Many of you are enthusiastic about the range of activities available after school. As with any school, there are some improvements which can still be made and we noted three. One is about improving attendance (where you can play a part too); another is to strengthen links with your parents and carers, and the third is for the senior managers to improve the monitoring of teaching.

Yours truly

R Kapadia

Her Majesty's Inspector