

Sir Frederic Osborn School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117525
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	339024
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	843
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Hughes
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2007
School address	Herns Lane Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire
Telephone number	0844 4772515
Fax number	0844 4772526
Email address	admin@sfosborn.herts.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2010
Inspection number	339024

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 lessons involving 31 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors and staff but no parents were seen. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, current assessment, exclusion and attendance data, governors' policies and documentation, and the evidence from the school's monitoring and evaluation of provision. They scrutinised 129 parental, 133 student and 57 staff questionnaires.

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

- students' learning and progress as demonstrated by the school's assessment information and through lesson observations
- the consistency and effectiveness of teaching and the use of assessment
- the impact of the school's specialist status and its partnerships on outcomes for all students
- the impact of senior and middle leaders in taking action to secure improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. There are relatively few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is below average. However, the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above average. More students than average join or leave the school during the year. The school has specialist status in sport and drama. It has achieved National Healthy Schools status and Sportsmark. It is part of a local consortium of five schools and a college offering post-16 courses. Years 11, 12 and 13 were taking examinations during the inspection and no lessons could be observed.

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

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory but improving education for students. It has a strong sense of community which one student described as being like 'a great big family'. Students, parents and staff all recorded confidence that students are kept safe. Those students that inspectors spoke to were proud of their school. The school's specialist status in sport and drama has improved the quality of teaching, the breadth of the curriculum, examination results and work with the community. It is having a growing impact across other subjects.

The headteacher sets a clear direction for the school based on rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. Governors monitor progress in subjects through a regular cycle of meetings with middle leaders. Subject leaders increasingly have the confidence and skills to drive improvement. Staff value all students and increasingly adapt the curriculum to suit their individual needs. Students' progress is assessed regularly and monitored carefully, including those who may be at risk or who have specific needs. Examination results for Year 11 improved significantly in 2009 with many indicators matching the national average although they remained below average overall. The school's latest assessment information indicates that results for the current Year 11 students are likely to improve on last year, especially in English and science. However, the proportion achieving five higher grades including English and mathematics may not match the average nationally because a minority of students only achieve a grade C in one or the other. Students make at least satisfactory progress and most reach their challenging targets. As a result, the school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but with strengths in the specialist subjects and, increasingly, in English, mathematics and science. However, there are a few lessons where teaching is not yet effective enough and this does affect examination results in some subjects. Teachers do not always plan different activities for students of differing needs and ability, nor do they set a pace which challenges all students appropriately. While there are examples of very good feedback to students on their work, there is still inconsistency in teachers' marking. The curriculum is innovative and increasingly flexible, including very effective partnerships which provide very good choice and variety for 14-19 year olds. The specialist subjects contribute strongly to a wide and interesting range of extra-curricular activities, events and community links.

Pastoral care for students is good and they are confident that they can refer any problems to staff. Support for students with specific needs is effective, based on good links to external agencies and an increasing range of help and guidance provided within school. Students get on well together and there is a calm atmosphere around the school. They willingly take on responsibility and enjoy opportunities to promote the

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

school through links with primary schools and the wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve students' attainment by:
 - increasing the proportion of students who achieve a GCSE grade C in both English and mathematics
 - raising results in subjects which are performing less well than the majority
 - reducing the gap between the least effective and the best teaching.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities in lessons which are matched closely to the differing needs of students
 - making sure that teachers set appropriate pace and challenge in lessons to extend all students
 - increasing the quality and consistency of teachers' comments and feedback to students on their work so that they know exactly how to improve it.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

In 2009, Year 11 attainment improved significantly on the previous year. The proportion of students achieving five or more grades A* to C improved to 59% and with English and mathematics it was 36%, above the National Challenge target. Results in science also improved substantially. Nevertheless, attainment remained below average overall. The school's assessment information for the current Year 11 indicates that results are likely to improve significantly again, bringing attainment closer to the average nationally. In 2009, students made broadly satisfactory progress from their starting points. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities made at least similar progress to all students. Those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language generally made better progress than their peers. The school's assessment information indicates that the current Year 11 students are likely to make at least satisfactory progress and to exceed their challenging targets.

In the lessons observed, students made generally satisfactory and often good progress. They enjoy practical activities and group work, learning effectively through these activities. They listen carefully and collaborate well, following instructions and organising themselves efficiently. When encouraged to think for themselves, they rise to the challenge and use their initiative. They can explain what they are expected to learn and understand what they need to do to reach their targets.

Students mix well and say there are few instances of bullying or racism in school. They behave well, particularly when moving around the school. They are polite and friendly,

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

talking with adults confidently and reflecting maturely on their work. Their attendance is improving and is now broadly average. Students take advantage of the very good provision for physical education and understand the need to have healthy lifestyles, as recognised in the Sportsmark and Healthy Schools status. Students are good ambassadors and enjoy helping others in their school and in primary schools. They feel that their voice is heard through effective school and sports councils, and have a strong sense of what is right and how they should treat each other.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors observed a full range of teaching quality but, overall, it was satisfactory. The best teaching included precise planning and lesson structure, high quality questioning, imaginative use of resources, very good relationships, enthusiastic and lively delivery and very effective use of assessment. These features resulted in high levels of enjoyment and good learning. Those lessons where teaching was less effective had inappropriate matching of tasks to ability, leading to slower progress for some students. On occasions, this resulted in them losing concentration. Assessment practice was

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

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

inconsistent between subjects, especially in the quality of teachers' marking and comments, the use of questions and reviewing achievement at the end of the lesson. The school has improved choice and relevance for students in the curriculum. Year 10 students and the sixth form benefit from a wide range of courses, making very good use of partnership arrangements. These include different modes of learning and assessment to suit students' needs. BTEC qualifications offered in the specialist subjects in Year 9 have enhanced achievement for all students. Increasingly, students have opportunities to start other GCSE courses early. There are good extension and intervention programmes which stretch or support students. Three extended learning days promote study skills throughout the school and younger students are developing confidence in learning through access to drama, thinking skills and regular reading sessions. There is a wide range of enrichment activities stimulated by the specialist subjects.

The school has an effective system for tracking students' progress and this is used well to ensure that support is provided when needed. There are very effective strategies to support students with specific needs, including those whose behaviour requires management or whose attendance is erratic, through skilled in-class help and small group work in the learning support unit. Links with primary schools are strong and this allows Year 7 students to settle in confidently and quickly. Students value and enjoy the programme of personal, social and health education and receive useful guidance on making subject choices and information about careers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with senior staff, sets a very clear direction for the school, strongly focused on raising students' achievement and improving teaching. As a result of effective action, results at GCSE have improved steadily and are likely to improve again in 2010. The school sets challenging targets and monitors students' progress carefully. Action plans are ambitious and linked closely to students' achievement. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are rigorous and senior staff know its strengths and weaknesses. They have high expectations of classroom practice and use effective strategies to support and develop weaker teachers, including successful links with a partner school. Teaching in some areas has improved and the focus is now strongly on closing the gap between the best and the least effective teaching. The leadership of subjects is also improving and there is some very effective practice but

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

there is also some inconsistency in effectiveness. Governors are well-organised and maintain relevant policies. They are linked to subjects and make regular visits to observe practice and discuss progress. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The school promotes equality of opportunity well. It tracks the progress of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and uses this information successfully to provide prompt support when needed. Most groups perform at least as well as students overall and the school can demonstrate improvement in the areas where it has taken action, for example on behaviour and attendance. Students strongly endorse fair treatment and the promotion of racial harmony. Students' and parents' questionnaires confirm that the school takes good care of students and provides a safe environment. Safeguarding procedures are secure and policies are detailed. Staff are well-trained and respond to any concerns. They maintain effective links with external agencies.

The school promotes community cohesion well and has analysed its religious, ethnic, and socio-economic context. There is a strong, cohesive ethos, and effective links have been developed with the local community and schools. Students' understanding of communities across the globe is developed well through the curriculum and active links with schools in Africa and other countries.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Outcomes in the sixth form are broadly average and showing improvement. Students make generally satisfactory progress from their starting points. Students' attendance is broadly average and retention rates on courses are good. Students take on

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

responsibilities as sports leaders, paired readers, peer mediators and school councillors. Although no sixth form teaching could be observed during the inspection, the school's own observations, verified by consortium review, indicate that it is usually good. Students report regular, thorough marking with formative comments to help them improve. There are constructive tutorials and review days although these tend to be based on target grades rather than an evaluation of students' skills and pointers for improvement. The curriculum, offered as part of a local consortium, is broad and provides an increasing variety of courses at differing levels. There is good access to computers for independent study. Students participate enthusiastically in the wide range of enrichment activities. The quality of sixth form provision is monitored across the consortium in conjunction with senior and subject leaders. Phased plans for broadening access to the sixth form are leading to steady improvement.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the work of the school, feeling that their children enjoyed school and were kept safe. A few parents expressed concerns that the school did not respond promptly or satisfactorily to issues that they raised but these views were balanced by more parents who praised the school's response to individual difficulties and the support which they and their children received. A few parents commented on variation in the quality of teaching and inspectors found that, while teaching was satisfactory overall and strong in some subjects, there was too large a gap between the best and the least effective teaching.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir Frederic Osborn 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 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 843 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	41	32	79	61	8	6	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	35	27	89	69	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	29	76	59	12	9	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	24	79	61	15	12	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	22	17	88	68	9	7	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	19	78	60	18	14	5	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	18	86	67	13	10	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)	28	22	79	61	5	4	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	26	73	57	13	10	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	19	84	65	13	10	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	16	79	61	13	10	7	5
The school is led and managed effectively	33	26	79	61	8	6	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	36	63	49	12	9	3	2

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). 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">■ 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 pupils' 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.



11 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Sir Frederic Osborn School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AF

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, meetings and at breaks. Thanks also to those of you who filled in a questionnaire. Your views helped us to find out about the school. This letter is to tell you what we found on our inspection.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education and is improving every year. Results achieved by Year 11 students and by the sixth form are now closer to the national average. They are improving strongly in English and science. You are mostly on track to achieve your targets. In lessons most of you behave well, concentrate and try hard. You learn best when tasks are practical or involve working together in groups. Your attendance is also improving. You told us that you feel safe at school and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. You get on well together and there is a strong sense of community in the school. You benefit from the impressive teaching and opportunities provided by the school's specialist subjects, physical education and drama. There is a good range of activities, trips and responsibilities available to you. Teaching is satisfactory overall and some is very good. Most of you know your targets and what you need to do to improve your work.

We asked the school to improve in some areas. We recommended that:

- your results improve further by ensuring more of you achieve a GCSE grade C in both English and mathematics and that currently weaker subjects catch up with the best
- teachers plan activities to match your differing needs and abilities and set the pace and level of challenge in lessons to make sure you can all make progress
- teachers use their comments and feedback on your work more consistently to help you know what you need to do to improve.

I am confident that your school will continue to improve. I wish you success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.