

Esher CofE High School

More Lane, Esher, Surrey, KT10 8AP

Inspection dates 13–14 June 2013 and 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well and make good progress in their learning. In 2013, the school achieved its best ever results.
- Teaching is good. Teachers' subject knowledge is universally strong. Teachers plan lessons that are organised, well resourced and often innovative.
- In the best lessons, students make rapid progress and show a real thirst for knowledge because teachers make very effective use of information about their prior attainment to plan activities that challenge students of all abilities.
- Senior leaders and the governing body consistently communicate high expectations and ambition. Many leaders are of a high calibre.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and are passionate about improving outcomes for all students.
- Professional development opportunities in the school are of a consistently high quality.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Support for individual students' needs is exemplary.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress made by higher and lower ability students is slower than for other students overall.
- The quality of teaching varies across subjects.
- Some teachers do not yet make sufficient use of information about students' prior attainment to plan and teach lessons that fully challenge students of all abilities.
- Some leaders do not evaluate precisely the impact of the school's actions on outcomes for different groups of students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors first visited the school in June 2013. Through no fault of the school, the inspection was considered ‘flawed’ as it was deemed to be incomplete. Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited the school in September 2013 to gather further evidence about the school’s overall effectiveness.
- Overall, inspectors observed 71 parts of lessons and two assemblies. Just over a third of lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed leaders giving feedback to teachers.
- Inspectors met with school staff, members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority. They talked to students in lessons and met with groups of students from different year groups and the school council. They also looked at students’ work and listened to students read in Years 7 and 8.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including its self-evaluation and improvement plans. They also looked at information about the quality of teaching and information about students’ achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- Her Majesty’s Inspectors took into account 192 responses to the Parent View survey and 92 responses to a staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead Inspector (June)	Additional Inspector
Maggie Bradley	Additional Inspector
Omar Ganie	Additional Inspector
Karen Roche	Additional Inspector
Christopher Wood, Lead inspector (September)	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Mary Massey	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Christine Raeside	Her Majesty’s Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Esher CofE High School is broadly similar in size to the average secondary school in England.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students with disabilities and special needs, who are supported through school action, is similar to the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The main needs relate to specific and moderate learning difficulties and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of students that are eligible for free school meals and, as a consequence, the pupil premium funding is lower than the national average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 attend alternative provision part time. Students currently undertake vocational courses at MIT Skills, N&B Training, ICON training and Brooklands College.
- The school is a National Teaching School. It is due convert to academy status in November 2013.
- Due to the proposed expansion of the school, major building works are underway on the school site. A phased completion for different projects is planned throughout 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the variability in teaching so that all students make rapid progress across the full range of subject areas, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers make effective use of information about students' prior attainment to plan and teach lessons that fully challenge students of different abilities, especially the least and most able.
 - ensuring that leaders provide teachers with feedback on their lessons that focuses more specifically on the learning and progress of different groups of students
 - continuing to embed the teaching of writing across all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels evaluate more precisely the impact of the school's actions on improving outcomes for specific groups of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- All students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, achieve well and make good progress in their learning by the time they leave school at the end of Key Stage 4. Overall, students' achievement fell in 2012 but rose sharply in 2013. The rate of progress made by different groups of students currently in the school is improving. Some students now make rapid progress. Nevertheless, lower and higher ability students make less progress than others.
- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are similar to other students nationally. Typically, they leave school at the end of Year 11 with attainment that is slightly above the average. In 2013, the school achieved its best ever results. Moreover, the proportion of students that attained the highest GCSE grades, A* or A, rose sharply in several subjects.
- In the past some groups of students underachieved. Leaders have acted to ensure that gaps in achievement between groups are closing. For example, in 2013, the progress made by students supported at school action plus improved significantly on previous years.
- The school has used its Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium funding well, with strong support in place for reading and a range of personalised help from learning mentors. Students eligible for the pupil premium now make progress at a faster rate than similar students nationally and at the same good rate as other students in the school. As a result, gaps in attainment are closing. In 2013 the proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium attaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was higher than in previous years.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Nevertheless, there are variations in the quality of teaching across different subject areas.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is universally strong. Teachers plan lessons that are organised, well resourced and often innovative. They are supported effectively by additional adults. In most lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and students' attitudes to learning are very positive.
- In the best lessons, students make rapid progress and show a real thirst for knowledge because teachers make very effective use of information about students' prior attainment to plan activities that challenge students of all abilities. In these lessons, teachers intervene promptly to ensure that students understand clearly what they need to do in order to improve their work and achieve their ambitious personal targets.
- In a successful mathematics lesson, for example, students made good and sometimes rapid progress because the teacher had planned a range of tasks of increasing difficulty and students were guided to the work that offered them the right level of challenge. In an outstanding textiles lesson, no time was wasted because the teacher had planned the lesson and the materials very carefully to allow students to work independently. The teacher observed closely how well students were learning and intervened skilfully when they needed further explanation or challenge.
- In some lessons, however, teachers do not yet make sufficient use of information about students' prior attainment to plan lessons that fully challenge all students, particularly the least and most able. Consequently, the progress made by these students, albeit good, is sometimes slower than their peers.
- Overall, the teaching of reading, writing, communication and mathematics is effective. Teachers plan activities that reinforce these important skills across the range of subjects. Whole school approaches are cohesively planned and implemented consistently. Nevertheless, the teaching of writing is currently less well embedded across the school. The 'Esher High School Literacy Mat' is a helpful resource recently introduced to support students in their writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is frequently exemplary. Their extremely positive attitudes to learning are demonstrated in high levels of engagement in lessons. Students are a credit to themselves, their parents and their teachers.
- During their time at school, students develop into extremely well-rounded young people. They value their teachers who 'really help, support us, stay behind after school and genuinely care about our grades'. They readily take up opportunities to support each other and serve the school community, through their roles as mentors or school councillors, and through the opportunities they have to develop their talents in sport, music and the arts. The Christian character of the school fosters an ethos that is compassionate, tolerant and outward looking. Together, these factors contribute to the students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students say that they feel very safe at school and 97% of parents who responded to the survey agree. They receive excellent advice from the school about how to keep themselves safe, be it the online risks associated with social media or moving safely around the school site during a major building programme.
- Students say that bullying is rare. When issues arise, students trust their teachers to act quickly and deal with problems thoroughly. Students spoke maturely to inspectors about different types of bullying and were united in their condemnation of racism and homophobic bullying. The school tackles the very rare incidences of discrimination robustly.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Support for those students who find it hard to behave well all of the time is excellent and personalised. Staff are highly skilled in helping such students to improve their behaviour. Attendance is similar to the national average and improving. The school has exceptionally well-devised and successful strategies to support students who find it hard to attend regularly.

The leadership and management are good

- The dedicated headteacher is supported by a talented senior team, enthusiastic middle leaders and a strong governing body. Many leaders are of a high calibre. They communicate a consistent vision of high expectations and ambition. Staff are proud to work at the school. They are passionate about improving outcomes for all students.
- Improvement plans are comprehensive and focus on the right priorities. Leaders monitor the impact of their actions carefully and are held accountable. They can demonstrate improvements over time to students' achievement and the quality of teaching. Some leaders, however, do not evaluate precisely the impact of the school's actions on outcomes for different groups of students. Overall, self-evaluation is accurate but, on occasions, it is slightly too positive.
- The school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are sophisticated. Leaders observe teachers at work frequently and evaluate their performance accurately. Formal feedback following observations is well focused and developmental. Occasionally, it does not make sufficient specific reference to the learning and progress made by different groups of students. Arrangements for assessing the quality of a teacher's performance are rigorous and salary progression is closely linked to students' good or rapid progress.
- Members of staff benefit from professional development opportunities that are of a consistently high quality. Some of the training programmes that the school runs, underpinned by its work as a teaching school, are highly regarded. One teacher's comments were typical, 'The support and training opportunities that are available to staff are exceptional.'
- Students take a good balance of academic and practical subjects that prepare them well for their future education and careers. Alternative provision and early entry for examination are used judiciously with those students who benefit most. The subjects that students take, alongside wider opportunities, contribute to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development. For example, in a Year 11 media studies lesson, students demonstrated a deep understanding of moral and ethical issues linked to censorship, freedom and responsibility.

- The good progress made by different groups of students is evidence of the school's successful promotion of equalities. Support for the relatively small proportion of students eligible for the Year 7 catch-up and pupil premium is based on an excellent knowledge of their individual needs and careful research into which activities will have the greatest impact. These students make good progress overall and gaps in achievement are closing.
 - Systems for keeping children safe are robust and comply with statutory requirements. Support for individual students is highly personalised and makes sensitive, but prompt, use of a range of strategies, including strong partnerships with external agencies.
 - Almost all of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey support the work of leaders very strongly. All would recommend the school to other parents. Even so, leaders are not complacent. They respond swiftly when concerns are raised. For example, new systems for setting homework have been implemented successfully following parents' responses to a recent survey.
 - Support from the local authority is well focused and proportionate to the school's needs.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are experienced and provide good levels of support and challenge. They have a firm grasp of information about the quality of teaching and the achievement of students. They have worked with leaders to ensure that decisions about teachers' pay are closely linked to their performance and the impact on outcomes for students.
 - Governors use performance information routinely to evaluate how well the school is doing compared with other schools nationally. Occasionally, their evaluations are slightly too positive.
 - Governors monitor outcomes for different groups of students carefully. They understand the rationale for the school's use of the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium. They ensure leaders report on the impact of spending on these pupils but have yet to carry out a full evaluation.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125274
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	411782

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1080
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Edwards
Headteacher	Simon Morris
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2009
Telephone number	01372 468068
Fax number	01372 471058
Email address	headteacher@esherhigh.surrey.sch.uk

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