

Furze Platt Senior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110066
Local Authority	Windsor And Maidenhead
Inspection number	337432
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Daniel Burton 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1150
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S P Le Page
Headteacher	Ms T S White
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 February 2007
School address	Furze Platt Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 7NQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent looking at the quality of students' learning. Inspectors observed 43 lessons, each delivered by a different teacher. They also visited four tutor periods and observed two assemblies. Inspectors held meetings with students, staff and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at policies, data and analyses, including the school's self-evaluation, governors' minutes and 276 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also looked at questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- students' achievements in science
- the achievement and personal development of students of Pakistani heritage and of students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable
- the impact of the curriculum in promoting good achievement for all groups of students
- the extent to which the sixth form has improved since the last inspection.

Information about the school

Furze Platt Senior School is a larger than average school. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are lower than average. The school makes provision for a small number of students with autistic spectrum disorder through a specialist resource base (AuRa). As a result, the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above average, although the overall proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college.

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

Furze Platt Senior School has improved significantly since the last inspection and now provides a good quality of education. As a result, attainment is above average and rising, attendance is outstanding and the very large majority of students now make good progress in their learning. Parents and carers recognise these improvements and over 97% of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 'Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school'. The impact of the headteacher in driving improvement is recognised by the whole school community. One sixth-form student, typifying the views of others, commented, 'The school has gone from strength to strength under Ms White's leadership.'

- The curriculum has been broadened to meet the needs and aspirations of a wider range of students than before.
- The quality of teaching has improved and is now good. Teachers consistently set clear learning objectives so that students understand what they are trying to achieve. They utilise a good range of learning activities to ensure that students remain engaged and enthused.
- Very effective specialist support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, ensures that they make the same good progress as other students. Arrangements to ensure that students stay safe are also excellent and are recognised and valued by students and their parents and carers.
- Outcomes for sixth-form students have improved year on year since the last inspection and the personal development of sixth formers is outstanding. The sixth form now provides a good quality of education.

Leaders and managers recognise the school's strengths but are also aware that provision needs to be strengthened further to build upon the improvements made.

- While teaching has improved, the use of assessment to inform teaching remains inconsistent. This means that, in some lessons, work is not closely enough matched to the needs of the whole group, resulting in work that is too hard for some and too easy for others. In some lessons, teachers fail to check that all learners have understood the work before moving on to the next task.
- Systems to monitor students' progress are not yet sufficiently responsive to students' achievements. As a result, targets sometimes become obsolete for students who quickly surpass them.

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- While the school has developed good systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, such systems do not yet extend to monitoring the quality and impact of tutor time.
- The introduction of the mixed-age tutoring system has been markedly successful in ensuring that the school itself is an extremely harmonious community. School leaders know that work to promote community cohesion in the local and wider community is not yet providing students with sufficient first-hand experiences of communities other than their own.

While some aspects of self-evaluation have been slightly overgenerous, the school community can rightly celebrate the progress made so far. Strong leadership, a committed team of staff, and a track record of clear improvement combine to demonstrate a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen the use of whole-school assessment by ensuring that students' targets are reviewed more regularly and are more responsive to their ongoing needs.
- Ensure that teachers' use of assessment to inform learning consistently reflects the best practice, so that:
 - learning activities are planned to fully meet the needs of students of different abilities
 - teachers consistently check students' learning within lessons and adapt their teaching accordingly.
- Strengthen quality assurance procedures to ensure that tutor periods consistently result in high quality learning and personal development.
- Extend the work to promote community cohesion by strengthening links with the local and wider communities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

- Students enjoy coming to school. They enjoy most of their lessons and appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities the school provides.
- The work seen in lessons and students' books reflected above average standards in both the main school and the sixth form.
- Excellent relationships contribute to the good progress students make in lessons. Students respond very well to opportunities to work together and they enjoy sharing their ideas with their friends and teachers. On occasion, their progress is hindered because learning is not well enough matched to their individual needs or because the teachers do not routinely check students' understanding. Some students with special educational needs and/or disabilities commented that occasionally this can result in poor behaviour.
- The school's work to raise the achievement of Pakistani boys and those in receipt of free school meals has been successful, and inspectors saw these students achieving as well as other groups in lessons.
- Whilst achievement in science has not been good enough in the past, it is

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improving rapidly and is now satisfactory overall. The majority of students now study for three science qualifications at GCSE and current GCSE students are making good progress. School monitoring systems provide firm evidence that the recently introduced BTEC qualification is having an impact in raising the achievement of less able scientists.

- Students’ personal development is good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. Sixth formers are excellent role models and their work as leaders and mentors resonates throughout the school. Younger students benefit from opportunities to take on leadership roles through the house system and through the ‘student voice’, but such opportunities are not yet as well developed as in the sixth form.
- Students in all years are highly appreciative of the mixed-age tutoring arrangements and say they have made a major contribution in making the school into a cohesive community where they feel extremely safe.

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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

- Good teaching is underpinned by teachers’ excellent subject knowledge and professionalism. Teachers are very well organised and lessons are prepared thoroughly. Lessons are conducted at a good pace and include a range of activities.
- In the outstanding lessons teachers use assessment information very effectively to plan tasks to meet the needs of all learners, but not enough teachers do this consistently well. In some lessons, students are expected to do the same work,

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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regardless of their prior attainment. Sometimes, students are asked to move on to the next learning activity when they have not fully understood the work done so far.

- All students, including the most able, benefit from an improved curriculum which is increasingly responsive to their needs. A wide range of GCSE courses is complemented by a growing range of additional qualifications, such as the 14–19 Diploma in construction and the built environment. A small number of students benefit from partnership arrangements which enable them to pursue courses available elsewhere. Some students benefit from opportunities to begin accredited courses in Year 9 and the school has introduced a GCSE humanities option for some of its gifted and talented students in Year 8.
- The school’s status as a specialist mathematics and computing college has had a clear impact in raising attainment in specialist subjects.
- Transition arrangements into the school are excellent and a number of parents commented very favourably about the school’s work to help younger students quickly settle in, particularly those from the smaller primary schools. Older students are extremely appreciative of the excellent advice they receive to help them plan the next steps in their education or training.
- Students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable also receive highly effective personalised support through, for example, the ‘Face’ project and other initiatives. A comprehensive peer mentoring programme is having a marked impact in raising the literacy and numeracy levels of younger students who need extra help. The school’s work to raise attendance has been extremely successful.
- School tracking systems are increasingly effective in enabling the school to address and identify underachievement. However, comprehensive systems to monitor the progress of students in Year 11 and in the sixth form are not yet so well embedded in other years.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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’s determination to drive improvement is shared by staff at all levels, and 98% of staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, ‘I am proud to be a member of staff at this school’.
- An effective senior management team has played an important role in securing improvements since the last inspection and the quality of middle leadership has

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strengthened. Leadership in science has been secured after a period of turbulence. The science department is well supported through effective line management procedures.

- The experienced team of governors knows the school well and provides good support and effective challenge. Governors’ links to individual departments are not yet consistently well embedded.
- The school engages well with parents and carers and is working to improve systems of reporting to parents following consultation with the parents’ forum.
- Excellent procedures to keep students safe are complemented by high quality collaborative work with key agencies.
- The effectiveness of the school’s work to promote equality of opportunity is reflected in the growing success of initiatives to ensure that all groups do equally well. The improved curriculum is providing growing opportunities for all groups of students to make the most of the opportunities available to them.
- While work to promote community cohesion within the school community is strong, leaders and managers recognise that work to promote cohesion in the local and wider community is yet to have an impact.

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	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

- Attainment is above average and rising, reflecting the good progress students make. Students leave school with good qualifications and the vast majority progress to university.
- Students make a very significant contribution to the school community, supporting younger students in their learning and leading a range of student groups.
- Sixth-form provision is matched well to the needs and interests of students.

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Teaching is consistently good and benefits from teachers’ excellent subject knowledge. Students speak highly of the school’s work to provide information, advice and guidance as they consider the next steps in their education or training.

- School actions to improve attendance in Year 13 have been markedly successful and sixth-form attendance is now high.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents are very supportive of the school and the quality of education it provides. Most responded positively to every statement in the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents are particularly appreciative of the leadership and management of the school, the school’s arrangements to keep their children safe and the quality of teaching in the school. A very small minority of parents expressed concerns about some aspects of the school’s work, for example its systems to keep them informed and to help them support their child’s learning. However, inspectors judged the effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents to be good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Furze Platt Senior 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 276 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1150 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	120	44	145	53	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	115	42	154	56	6	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	109	40	148	54	15	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	95	34	154	56	18	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	83	30	179	65	5	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	27	157	57	31	11	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	24	174	63	22	8	2	1
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)	102	37	147	53	11	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	31	166	60	14	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	29	157	57	23	8	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	70	25	167	61	20	7	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	137	50	129	47	5	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	133	48	135	49	6	2	0	0

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	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 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.

5 March 2010

Dear Students



Inspection of Furze Platt Senior School, Maidenhead SL6 7NQ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to inspectors when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons and in meetings, and are grateful to those of you who completed the Ofsted questionnaire and to those who chose to write to us. Here are our main findings, although we hope that some of you will read the full report.

- Your school has improved significantly since it was last inspected and now provides a good quality of education. Examination results have improved and are now above the national average. The large majority of you make good progress in your lessons.
- Teaching is better than before and is now good. Your teachers are particularly good at using a range of teaching strategies to ensure that most students enjoy their lessons.
- The school is extremely effective in keeping you safe. Many of you told us that you think the vertical tutoring system is great. It was terrific to see students from Year 7 to Year 13 getting on so well.
- School leaders have improved the curriculum so that it provides you with a broader range of qualifications to choose from. You are increasingly benefiting from a more flexible curriculum which meets your individual needs.

Your teachers know that there is more to be done for the school to continue to improve. Inspectors have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that work in lessons is always matched to your individual needs, and that teachers always check that you have understood the aim of each activity.
- Ensure that your targets are regularly updated to reflect how well you are progressing.
- Make sure that the time you spend in tutor periods is always of high quality.
- Provide you with more opportunities to gain first-hand experience of communities other than your own.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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