Imberhorne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126088
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340918
Inspection dates	28-29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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	11-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1653
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Darvill
Headteacher	Mr J Ford
Date of previous school inspection	7-8 March 2007
School address	Imberhorne Lane East Grinstead West Sussex RH19 1QY
Telephone number	01342 323562
Fax number	01342 317366
Email address	info@imberhorne.w-sussex.sch.uk

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

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 50 teachers in lessons and held meetings with governors, teaching and support staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence. This included assessment information, students' work, key policies and practices, including those on safeguarding and health and safety, records of the monitoring of teaching, school improvement plans and arrangements to support vulnerable learners. Parents and carers returned 279 questionnaires which were analysed by inspectors.

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

- the progress made by average attainers
- key factors in the personal development of students
- progress in the quality of teaching in relation to their questioning skills and effective use of interactive electronic boards
- attainment in the sixth form with a focus on the proportion of higher A-level grades.

Information about the school

Imberhorne is a larger than average language specialist school with a large sixth form. The school is on a split site with Years 7 to 9 based over a mile away from the main site. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and statements of special educational needs are well below average. A very low percentage of students are entitled to free school meals. Over 90% of students are from White British backgrounds with small numbers from other ethnic groups. There is currently a significant proportion of Traveller (Showground) children on roll. The school is in a Leading Edge Partnership with three other schools with the task of developing leadership through school improvement projects. Amongst a range of awards and accreditations, the school has developed links with students in a number of countries and attained the International Schools Award.

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? 1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 1

Main findings

Imberhorne is an outstanding school which has made excellent progress since the last inspection. The headteacher and managers at all levels strive successfully to provide equal opportunities for all groups of students. The focus on individual ambition and independent learning for each student is emphasised from Year 7 onwards. It equips them with the best possible social and academic skills necessary for them to meet the challenges of life after school. The governing body and parents and carers fully support the direction in which the school is moving. A parent wrote, 'All teachers I have had contact with work incredibly hard to offer a great learning experience at Imberhorne.' The current self-review of the impact of the last three-year school improvement plan is very thorough and honest and there is no danger of any complacency setting in. Governance is very impressive and governors play a full part in the life of the school and provide considerable challenge and support to senior managers and staff. Safeguarding procedures and their impact are outstanding. The school has an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

The ability profile of students on entry to the school is broadly average. Attainment is high and is continually improving year on year especially in English, mathematics and science. The school's assessment and tracking systems monitor individual performance very closely. They show that students of all abilities and groupings, including average attainers and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making excellent progress. They enjoy their learning and often achieve outstanding results across a wide range of subjects and activities. Teaching is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form where a higher proportion of students than previously now achieve the higher grades. Individual students receive further additional support outside normal lessons through 'twilight' sessions and one-to-one follow-up by subject teachers and tutors. These teaching and intervention strategies, underpinned by an excellent curriculum, have the impact of accelerating students' progress significantly and most make much better-than-expected progress. The school recognises that teaching is good overall and that there is some inconsistency in the use of assessment by some teachers to make students aware of how far they are on the way to achieving their targets.

Students feel very safe, smile a great deal and are committed to a healthy lifestyle. The personal development of the individual student is outstanding and a key element in supporting the high achievement patterns. Attendance is above average and behaviour is excellent. The school undertakes its wider responsibilities as a specialist school well and is a strong ambassador for languages within the local community.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency between teachers in informing students of how well they are performing in relation to their targets - by September 2011.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils 1

Attainment overall since 2007 shows a marked, upward trend. Teachers monitor students' progress rigorously. Targets at the end of Years 9 and 11 are regularly exceeded. No groups of students underachieve. Significantly more students gain the higher GCSE grades because the school quickly implements intervention measures when necessary. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because of the effective encouragement and support they receive from teachers and learning support staff. A younger student commented, 'We learn something different every day.' The quality of students' learning was exemplified in a Year 10 history lesson on the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife. Students' note-taking indicated good skills in identifying the salient points from an excellent re-enactment video of the assassination. Skilful support from the teacher led to high levels of learning to examine the question of why war broke out in 1914.

The school has effectively employed a counsellor and learning mentors to address barriers to learning which may affect a student's willingness to attend school. Students speak very highly of the support they receive. The school's clear structures, a comprehensive pastoral programme and positive relationships help students, including those needing additional support, to manage personal risk and to feel well cared for and safe. Students on residential trips to the Brecon Beacons and elsewhere are taken out of their 'comfort zones' and learn techniques of how to look after themselves safely. Students respect one another and the high levels of inclusion are central to the school's ethos and reflected at every level. The school council contributes in many ways to the life of the school, for example through its involvement in school and departmental self-review or by influencing the development of the 'independent learning projects'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and promoted by well-planned citizenship and personal and social education courses throughout the school. Students know the importance of healthy lifestyles and the dining room offers healthy options for them to choose. A gardening club, based in the lower school, has been a great success and sells its produce to the kitchen. Students have well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, which prepare them effectively for adult life. They make a substantial contribution to the life of the local and wider communities. For example, students of all ages made an educational video on the benefits of re-cycling ('TRASH') together with a central event where students from Years 7 to 13 paraded the catwalk in outfits made entirely from recycled materials. Traveller (showground) students attend well when not moving around the country with their families.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	**1**
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment[1]	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance[1]	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

From Year 7 onwards, students with the support of teachers, support staff and sixth form leaders, develop excellent skills at interpreting information, making choices, and working in teams. These are often linked to future workplace skills. For example, in a Year 11 English GCSE revision lesson, students responded enthusiastically to lively well-informed teaching when comparing two poems. A particular feature of their learning was their confidence in discussing emotions arising from the poems and the way they learned from each other. Since the last inspection, teachers' questioning skills and their imaginative use of the interactive whiteboard stimulates students' interests, enhances sustained concentration and ensures effective learning. Assessment for learning is not consistently at a high level for all teachers and this has an impact on whether student targets are effectively met in lessons. The school rightly recognises that there are a few occasions when students need to be aware not only of their targets but also where they are in relation to those targets. Additional provision, twilight sessions and other interventions ensure nevertheless that students do make excellent progress towards their targets. There are good opportunities for teachers to review and share practice within and across departments, so that teaching and learning are continually enhanced.

The curriculum is outstanding in meeting the individual and often complex needs of all groups of students. There is strong emphasis on languages and all students study at least one language through Key Stages 3 and 4. The impact of the school's specialism in the primary schools and within the community is strong. Enrichment

[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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clubs in arts and extra-curricular clubs have excellent participation rates and are commented on positively by students and by parents and carers on both sites. Sport is a strong element in the school but in the upper school indoor provision is cramped and there is no games hall. Vocational courses provide teachers with further options on learning styles and help to personalise the offer for students. There is an extensive programme of community, work-related learning and business links. Very good transition arrangements exist from primary school and in the subsequent transfer to upper school. These link effectively into very good guidance about post-school education, entering the sixth form or gaining employment. Contacts and communication with parents and carers are excellent and provide a basis for outstanding care, guidance and support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	**2** 2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Students view teachers and adults - at all levels of management - as a powerful, motivating force throughout the school. The impact of their leadership can be seen in the high quality education provided by the school, the excellent progress made by students and in the creation of a school ethos that is friendly, welcoming and mutually supportive. Close attention is paid to ensuring that outstanding safeguarding procedures are in place and that statutory duties are reviewed regularly and meet requirements. Policies and their impact are updated regularly to ensure that they reflect the best practice and are followed consistently by all staff. Professional support and in-service training days are regularly used to raise awareness of child protection and of teaching and curriculum issues. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.

Governance is thoughtful but challenging and the governing body includes a wide range of expertise. Governors examine the impact of policies on the school's work and hold the school accountable. For example, successful self-evaluation through the 'triad' system includes a governor, head of subject and a senior manager. Minutes of these minutes confirm that these discussions are rigorous and productive. The promotion of community cohesion is good and has some outstanding features in terms of the local community and in the scope of the school's contacts internationally. Features of the diversity within the United Kingdom are not as strong, but the school has recognised this and already is making progress in this area. The effective promotion of equal opportunities leads to harmony across all ethnic groups and has improved the performance of students needing additional support.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	**1**
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	**1**
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	**1**
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	**1**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	**1**
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	**1**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	**1**

Sixth form

Sixth form performance has shown exceptional improvement since the last inspection. All groups of students make excellent progress and attainment is high. Improvements have been achieved through consistently outstanding or good teaching and because of the excellent leadership and management of the head of sixth form and sixth form tutors. For example, in a Year 13 chemistry lesson the teaching style effectively supported students' independent learning and consequently enabled them to consolidate fully their understanding of organic reactions. In general, a clear assessment of the students' work by the teacher enables a highly focused, well-considered dialogue which drives learning forward so that the student achieves better than expected results. Excellent use is made of new technology. All sixth form students make an effective contribution to the school or wider community. Many take on roles as curriculum leaders in supporting younger students, for example as science or language leaders, and gain accreditation for doing so. Key life-skills, such as independence, reliability and time management, are reflected for students in the models set by teachers. Impressive contributions are made to the governing body meetings by two associate sixth form governors elected by the whole school. Every opportunity is taken by the school to extend involvement in school life. The sixth form Charity Committee decides jointly with the school council which charities to support each year.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	**1**
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

In their response, the overwhelming majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and its impact on their children's well-being. They also believe that the school is well led and managed. The quality of pastoral care, the curriculum and opportunities for extra-curricular activities were highly praised. A minority of parents and carers expressed concern about behaviour, healthy lifestyles and insufficient information for them to support their children's learning. Inspectors found behaviour to be excellent, noted that there was a good range of healthy options available in the dining room, and, that there were clear procedures for parents and carers to approach the school about their children's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Imberhorne 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 279 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1653 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	34	166	59	13	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	104	37	168	60	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	105	38	154	55	18	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	107	38	153	55	14	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	93	33	167	60	12	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	28	159	57	30	11	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	20	179	64	31	11	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)	92	33	153	55	18	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	83	30	166	59	21	8	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	25	167	60	26	9	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	60	22	165	59	17	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	102	37	159	57	9	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	120	43	143	51	12	4	2	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**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:	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. ■ 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.

30 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Imberhorne School, East Grinstead RH19 1QY

We are writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. You will be pleased to learn that we judge Imberhorne to be an outstanding school. We were very impressed with so much of what we saw and heard over the two days.

These are the main findings of our inspection.

- You told us personally and through your questionnaire responses that you enjoy school and that relationships between students and adults are excellent. We were particularly impressed by your courtesy to each other and to us and the way that nearly all of you smiled a great deal.
- All groups of students make excellent progress and achieve high levels of attainment.
- Students in the sixth form achieve outstanding results while contributing effectively as leaders within the main school.
- Teaching is good including much that is outstanding.
- Your choices in an excellent curriculum are flexible, meet your personal needs and added to by additional learning opportunities and a very wide choice of extra-curricular activities.
- The high levels of care, guidance and support provided by the school allow you to flourish as learners and develop high levels of independence.

The inspection team agrees with the school that they are giving you high goals and targets to aim at in all years. However, in a number of lessons some of you are not always clear where you stand in relation to reaching those targets and we have asked the headteacher to ensure teachers inform you about this consistently. You can help by working with your teachers so that you know how well you are performing. Once again, thank you for the welcome and we wish you the very best of luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans
Lead inspector

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