

Eggar's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116404
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312294
Inspection dates	29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Joanna Beckford-Hall (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	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	844
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Crowe
Headteacher	Mrs Felicity Martin
Date of previous school inspection	06 July 2004
School address	London Road Holybourne Alton GU34 4EQ
Telephone number	01420 541194
Fax number	01420 593412

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How high are achievement and standards currently at both Key Stage 3 and 4?
- How effective is leadership and management in closing the attainment gap between boys and girls?
- How successful is teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 and 4? Is there evidence of consistency across the school to support the judgement of outstanding teaching and learning?
- How successful is the personal development and well-being of students throughout the school?

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, national published assessment data, observing lessons, discussions with staff and students, and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Eggar's School is smaller than average. It takes students aged 11-16 from a semi-rural area of Hampshire. Most of the students are of White British heritage, and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is well below the national average as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also very low. The school has a designated Resourced Provision for students with dyslexia.

The school was awarded specialist science status in 2004 and has recently acquired both training school status and the gold standard as a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Consultant School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Eggar's School is a truly outstanding school. Students are exceptionally mature and are great ambassadors for the school. Their commitment to learning and enjoyment of all aspects of school life permeate the learning culture and family ethos of the school. As one student said, 'it's just brilliant here. We really enjoy Eggar's so much because the teaching is excellent and the teachers know us all so well'. Responses in the parental questionnaires showed overwhelming support for Eggar's School. One parent stated that 'all of my three children loved going to Eggar's and we can't ask for more than that'.

The very high levels of enjoyment, exceptional attitudes to learning, focused use of monitoring and assessment and outstanding care and guidance, enable students to make outstanding progress. Students' attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average and by the time they leave school students have made excellent progress. The proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE level including English and mathematics has remained above the national average for the last three years. Despite a slight dip in results in 2008, the school's data from recent modular examinations along with detailed assessments by staff, indicate that the current Year 11 are on track to meet predicted outcomes for GCSE results in 2009. Some variation in attainment in subjects in 2008 has been remedied by stringent action to raise the quality of teaching. Students reach standards by the end of Key Stage 3 that are well above the national average, a consistent pattern since the last inspection. Senior leaders have diligently pursued measures to close the attainment gap between boys and girls. The impact of the Breakthrough for Boys project and well-designed support for boys across all ability levels is swiftly reducing the attainment gap.

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding because the school invests considerable effort in educating and nurturing students as responsible young citizens. Students' respect for each other, the staff and the school environment is seen in outstanding behaviour. Students move around the school in a sensible manner, and behaviour in lessons is outstanding. Students know that on rare occasions when behaviour slips, it is dealt with swiftly and fairly. Students feel listened to and that their ideas are taken seriously. In discussions with leaders, students led the revisions to the behaviour policy. Students acknowledge that this kind of cooperation builds trust in their school community.

Attendance is above average and punctuality is excellent. Students are keen to get to lessons because they enjoy learning. They appreciate the very good facilities and the tidy and litter-free environment shows their pride in looking after their school. Students feel safe. They value sessions with guest speakers to deepen their understanding of health education, staying safe and the dangers of knife crime. They get the best out of discussions with visiting speakers because, as confident learners, they have the good communication skills to share ideas and ask questions. Students take full advantage of the extensive enrichment opportunities. Participation rates in sporting activities are high and students are keen to pursue healthy lifestyles.

Understanding of different faiths, cultures, traditions and ethnicities through curriculum topics and assemblies, enables students to develop a very good understanding of equality and diversity. Work with the local school for severely disabled children is a particularly positive aspect of the students' work in the local community.

The outstanding personal development and well-being of students is most vivid in the application letters for the positions of head boy and head girl. The thoughtfulness and tone of each letter shows how students hold these roles, and those of prefects, in high esteem. A wish to take on leadership roles and be good role models for others is clear in statements such as, 'I would be proud and privileged to [be] able to call myself head girl of such a prestigious school' and 'I want this position because I would like to give something back to the school that has given me so much'.

Teaching and learning are outstanding because teaching staff and all leaders maintain a relentless focus on the impact of teaching on learning. Monitoring the quality of teaching is systematic, creating insightful dialogue across departments about how to improve learning. Outstanding teaching fully engages students and learning is well planned to meet the needs of each student. Learning objectives are carefully structured, helping students to see how objectives for each lesson give sequence to their learning over time. Pace is brisk and students are challenged to think for themselves. They respond well by asking difficult questions, forming their own opinions and arriving at hypotheses and conclusions.

Students have enquiring minds. A student said they 'develop skills as independent learners that will help [them] in the future'.

Extremely positive relationships between teaching staff and students act as a catalyst for teaching that takes creative risks to stimulate students to meet challenging targets. Working independently, in pairs or in small groups, students learn well together, debating and listening to differences of opinion. Successful peer assessment develops students' ability to give constructive criticism about each other's work. In rare instances where learning is less well matched to the needs of students, they receive less challenge, the pace slows and students' engagement declines.

The senior team is prudent in its actions to develop an outstanding curriculum. Innovation is well thought-out and decisions are measured against outcomes for students. A review of the curriculum resulted in the inclusion of courses more appropriate to the needs of all students, such as Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) provision in science and information and communication technology (ICT). Vocational programmes delivered in partnership with local providers are carefully developed. Specialist courses in agriculture, equine studies and health and beauty complement more traditional GCSE programmes, offering Year 10 and Year 11 students a much greater choice at Key Stage 4 than previously. Progress of students on courses at local providers is well managed so that staff have accurate information about how well students are doing. Personal learning and thinking skills through cross-curricular projects at Key Stage 3 help students apply knowledge from different subject areas.

The impact of the specialist science status features strongly in both the mainstream curriculum and in the outreach with local primary schools. Science activities led by staff and students from Eggar's build bridges for students coming into Year 7, developing investigation skills ready for Key Stage 3.

Outstanding pastoral care and academic guidance give students a personalised level of support. Regular marking of work, reviewing of targets and challenging questions in students' books make them think about how to improve their work. Vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from fantastic support from specialist staff, the designated resourced provision for students with dyslexia and from close working relationships with outside agencies. Transition arrangements for Year 6 to Year 7 remain strong. Parental responses celebrate the efforts of the school in helping young people quickly settle into their new school. 'My son has made a seamless transition from primary school, the ethos and friendliness of the school is wonderful', typifies comments made by parents of Year 7 students.

The headteacher's vision is deeply embedded in the ethos of the school. Senior and middle leaders fully support the headteacher and are passionate in striving for continuous school improvement. Leaders at all levels understand what works well in the school. Self-evaluation is meticulous and presents an honest, accurate judgement of strengths and areas where all leaders see room for development. Setting, reviewing and monitoring challenging targets are managed very well. Initiatives such as the 'data war room' give all leaders and teaching staff a clear picture of standards and progress. Cohesive work by all leaders has direct impact on outcomes for students, and governors are rigorous in holding leaders to account for such outcomes. The capacity to improve further is outstanding.

A culture of empowerment and distributed responsibility creates a positive working environment for all staff. Staff morale is high and seminar groups are a forum for extending best practice across departments. Succession planning features strongly in the work of the leadership team and a high proportion of staff stay at Eggar's School because they know their professional development is valued.

Students have an outstanding awareness of how to integrate with a diverse range of people. They display exceptional understanding of why equality is important to community cohesion. Pen pal links with the twinned town in France, work with disabled people and senior citizens, and the great range of charity work are testament to the open minds and receptive nature of Eggar's students. The audit of community cohesion influences how the school continues to build national and local links to give opportunities to engage with people from different cultures and faiths.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards continue to rise, building upon the excellent strategic use of assessment and monitoring data throughout the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Eggar's School, Alton, GU34 4EQ

Thank you for the very warm and polite welcome I received when I inspected your school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and finding out why you enjoy your school so much.

I would like to share the findings of the inspection with you. I judged your school to be providing you with an outstanding quality of education. The teaching you receive is very well planned, helping you to reach your targets. It challenges you to develop your debating and thinking skills. You are very enthusiastic about learning and your outstanding behaviour really helps you to get the very best out of lessons. The curriculum is well balanced and you talked confidently about how the really good range of courses helps you to make the right choices for your future. It was pleasing to hear how you value the very good facilities you have at school, particularly the science opportunities you have across the curriculum.

The leadership and management of your school are outstanding. Your headteacher cares passionately about giving you experiences to help you to succeed. Her leadership motivates all of the staff to make Eggar's a really successful school.

The progress you make is outstanding. To help you reach even higher standards by the end of Year 11, I have asked your headteacher to ensure that standards continue to rise, building upon the excellent strategic use of assessment and monitoring data throughout the school.

I was very impressed with your mature attitudes to learning, the pride you take in looking after your school environment and the respect you show for each other. You are excellent ambassadors for your school and it was a pleasure to hear how much you value the education you receive at Eggar's School.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

