

# The Tiffin Girls' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102602
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kingston Upon Thames
<b>Inspection number</b>	323665
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	895
Sixth form	289
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Pamela Sweetnam
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Pauline Cox
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Richmond Road Kingston Upon Thames KT2 5PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8546 0773
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8547 0191

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well do students progress throughout the school, particularly in English and in the sixth form?
- How well do minority ethnic students progress and why?
- How well does the school promote community cohesion?

Evidence was gathered from performance data, external monitoring, observations of teaching and the work produced by students. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with parents, students, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

The school is a selective girls' grammar school. It draws students from a very wide area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. There is a higher proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools. The largest groups are from Sri Lanka and India. The school experienced a major fire in 2003 and moved into a new wing in September 2006. There was a major flood in 2007.

The school has had a specialism for mathematics and computing since 2002. In September 2007, the school also became a specialist languages college following designation as a high performing school. The school has Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and the International School Award.

The school is to become a Foundation school from 1 April 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Tiffin Girls' School continues to provide an outstanding quality of education and students consistently attain exceptionally high results in GCSE and A-level examinations. The school constantly strives for and achieves excellence. Parents overwhelmingly agree that the school provides an excellent academic education and as one wrote, 'The ethos and atmosphere of this school is fantastic. They expect the best of the girls.' The school is not complacent and has successfully adopted languages as another specialism since the previous inspection. It is outward-looking and, particularly through the outstanding leadership of its headteacher, is drawing on its own good practice to support other schools.

Students enter the school with exceptionally high attainment. They subsequently attain exceptionally high standards in external examinations at each key stage. For instance, at GCSE all girls attain five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics. The very high attainment at each key stage means that the usual measures for the value added by the school do not accurately reflect the progress made by students. Achievement is outstanding overall because the great majority of students make the maximum progress possible. However, a few students do not do as well in GCSE English as they do in GCSE mathematics. The school is meticulously tracking the progress of minority ethnic groups. This shows that in 2008 some of these groups also made excellent progress but not consistently. The school has identified that some of these students are not as proficient as their classmates in continuous prose and is taking steps to address this.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. They have established very positive learning atmospheres in classrooms and provide ample opportunities for students to contribute to lessons. The students have a lot to offer and they learn from one another too.

Students are rightly proud of their school and its achievements. They enthuse about the many extra-curricular activities on offer, particularly in art, drama, music and sport. Their involvement contributes to their considerable enjoyment of school. Pastoral care is excellent and means that they feel very safe. They have many opportunities to take responsibility, for example as prefects and as representatives for their class. The school is innovative: 'student researchers' were appointed in 2006 and have been trained by the psychology department in the effective use of questionnaires. They have investigated issues such as dress code, and have presented reports to other students in assemblies and also to governors. Students have an excellent understanding of healthy living issues. There is a very rich range of sports available through the curriculum, including ones not normally offered in most schools, such as yoga, tae kwon do, kayaking and street dance. Many of the students excel at sports at county level and some nationally and internationally. There is extensive provision for enterprise activities and this is a strength throughout the school. Consequently, students have excellent economic awareness. For example, the school was the national winner of the Bank of England and the Times Target 2.0 challenge competition. Members of the winning team have all done work experience at the Bank of England.

The previous inspection explained how the specialist subjects of mathematics and computing were having a positive impact within the school and with other local schools. This continues to be developed. The school has innovative plans to enhance the use of information and communication technology by making minibooks available in classrooms. This excellent work

has continued and has been further enhanced by the contributions of the languages department. The work with primary schools in this area is highly valued. The support for other schools is outstanding. Students come from a wide area and this partly explains why links with the local community are less strong. In addition, approximately 1 in 6 of the 254 responses to the parents' questionnaire replied that the school does not take sufficient account of their views.

Leadership and management are excellent. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This means that the school development plan identifies the right priorities and is an effective tool. The governors are supportive and challenging. They have helped the school considerably in overcoming severe accommodation problems while maintaining very high standards. Although an outstanding school already, capacity for further improvement is excellent.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

There is a thriving sixth form that richly deserves its high reputation. Students are very enthusiastic and typical comments were, 'We come here to work hard, play hard', 'You never feel alone here' and 'It is brilliant'. Students value the chance to help pupils with their learning in primary schools. Standards are exceptionally high. At A level, double the proportion nationally gain a grade A or B. The high quality of the sixth form is reflected by the very high numbers staying on from Year 11. Over 90% of the students succeed in gaining a place at their first-choice university. In an excellent Year 13 philosophy lesson, through very skilled questioning, the teacher challenged and teased out the students' views and opinions about the concept of 'love'. The take-up of modern foreign languages has doubled and is another example of the impact of the languages specialism. The number of students studying mathematics continues to be very high. In chemistry, students make good progress generally but the school recognises that a few more could achieve grade A. This is being addressed through additional support and the curriculum has been revised.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all students make the same progress over Years 7 to 11 in English as they do in mathematics.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

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

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Tiffin Girls' School, Kingston Upon Thames, KT2 5PL

Thank you very much for all your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. We met with groups including student researchers, school officers, form captains and others. You told us that you go to a brilliant school and we agree. The school is outstanding and these are some of its excellent features:

- standards are exceptionally high throughout the school
- there is an exciting curriculum that you enjoy
- your behaviour is exemplary
- you make an excellent contribution to the school community
- you have excellent teachers
- the sixth form is a thriving community
- the school makes effective use of its specialist subjects to help you and other schools
- the school is exceptionally well led.

The school is not complacent and is always striving for excellence. There is one thing that we have asked it to do. We are asking the school to seek ways to ensure that you all make the same excellent progress in GCSE English that you do in GCSE mathematics.

We wish you continuing success in the future.

Yours faithfully

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector