

Ricards Lodge High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102673
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	335947
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	John Daniell HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Savill
Headteacher	Alison Jerrard
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, observed 36 teachers and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and students. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including policies, self-evaluation information and school improvement plans, lesson plans, performance data and reports from the local authority following their visits. Telephone conversations also took place with school partners and other organisations. The team scrutinised 129 parent and carer questionnaires as well as questionnaires from students and staff.

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

- the attainment of students, particularly in English and mathematics
- the curriculum and how it meets the needs of the students, particularly in its vocational aspects
- the learning and progress of groups of students and the use of assessment in lessons.

Information about the school

Ricards Lodge High School is larger than average. The school has specialist status in performing and visual arts and an Artsmark Gold award. The school is proud of its multicultural intake; almost two thirds of the student population comes from a minority ethnic background. Nearly 60% of students speak English as an additional language. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average and the school also has specialist provision, the Cedar Base, for students with speech and language or communication needs. The school will open a combined sixth form with a nearby school in September 2010 and a new sixth form centre has recently been constructed.

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

Ricards Lodge High School provides its students with a good standard of education. Aspects of its work are outstanding including the care, guidance and support for its students and the way it works in partnership to improve their well-being and achievement. Students' attainment in the specialist arts subjects is significantly above the national average and their success in these subjects has a positive impact on their personal development and well-being. Attainment on entry is below average and the progress of previous cohorts in English and mathematics has been no more than satisfactory. The senior leaders' drive and determination to raise attainment in these subjects, by the strategic deployment of teachers and resources, mean that the school is now on course to raise attainment in English and mathematics to above the national average by the end of this academic year. The inspection team saw good progress being made in these subjects and the school provided hard and reliable data to prove that the attainment in mathematics and English of the current Year 11 is set to rise significantly. Future cohorts are stronger and making good or better progress.

Teachers display good subject knowledge and have high expectations of their students. Relationships are good and students usually rise to the challenges set and behave well. This in turn facilitates good learning and progress, including for those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A drive to improve the use of student assessment data has led to a much greater emphasis on planning lessons that take the needs of different students into account, although this good practice is not yet universally applied. In a number of lessons observed by inspectors, students were grouped by ability but then presented with the same activity. This led to the most able not being fully challenged and lower-ability students struggling to keep up. In the best lessons the needs of individual students are fully addressed and their progress is outstanding. In these lessons teachers use sharply targeted questions to engage and stretch students of all abilities. In other classes teachers occasionally seek responses only from the same students, allowing others to disengage.

Oral feedback to students by teachers is generally of high quality and keeps them well informed of their progress against challenging targets. Written feedback is conscientiously completed but is of variable quality. Some teachers provide high-quality written targets, but students are rarely required to act on them, which limits their impact on learning.

New curriculum pathways have been introduced in Key Stage 4 which cater for the needs of all students through the introduction of more vocational courses, fast-track groups, a range of options for studying science and more extra-curricular activities. In Key Stage 3 an increased emphasis on learning and thinking skills, including collaborative working, is being of demonstrable benefit to students

Factors contributing to the school's good capacity for further improvement are:

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- the proven ability of the headteacher and senior leaders to inspire all members of the school community to focus on driving up standards and to raising levels of attainment from students' low starting points to above the national average, as indicated in data provided for the current Years 10 and 11
- the accurate monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders which lead to a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- a good and constantly evolving curriculum that meets the needs of its students
- the removal of barriers to improvement by developing the school's key leaders, including those in the core subjects, and refining assessment systems.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment in mathematics and English so that it is securely above the national average by the end of 2011.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - embedding good assessment practice and sharpening teachers' questioning techniques to engage all students in their learning
 - ensuring that all teachers provide the high-quality written feedback provided by some and that students reflect and act on this feedback.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In 2009 good attainment in arts subjects helped 75% of students achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C not including English and mathematics, significantly above the national average. However, the number of students gaining five or more GCSEs at this level including English and mathematics was only 46%, no more than broadly average. The attainment of students who speak English as an additional language was significantly above average in 2009 because these students made better progress than many other groups. School data, including GCSE module test results, demonstrate that more than 60% of students are set to gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2010 and this is set to increase further in 2011.

Although the attainment of students on entry is below the national average, inspectors saw good and sometimes outstanding progress being made in lessons. The large majority of students, including the most vulnerable and those with statements of special educational needs, demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and concentrate well. Students show respect for the feelings and values of others, for example in a Year 8 history lesson on apartheid where they showed good empathy and understanding. They particularly enjoy and make good progress in lessons where learning is active. For example, students in a Year 9 science lesson participated fully in discussing ethics and whether the advent of cloning meant that men could now be made redundant in reproduction.

An overwhelming majority of students say they feel safe in school and this view is echoed by parents and carers. Older students operate a very effective buddy system to support the younger ones. The students are well behaved in lessons and around the school and the exclusion rate is low, largely due to the impact of the school's very good behaviour

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policy. A very large majority of students believe that the school encourages them to lead healthy lifestyles and many take advantage of what the school offers them. Extra-curricular activities are extensive and participation rates are good, particularly among younger students. Students celebrate their diverse range of cultures through various events, work closely together in productions and teams, and show a deep sensitivity to others.

The students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding. A large number have positions of responsibility and these help to develop their leadership skills and nurture their self-esteem. Attendance is above average, but a few students still have too relaxed an attitude to punctuality.

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	3
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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

A wide range of activities and teaching styles, including drama techniques, is used in lessons across the curriculum to engage students, and good use is made of interactive whiteboards to structure lessons. Professional development targeted at improving teaching is helping teachers to use students' levels of attainment to plan lessons and assess progress. Subject-based teaching assistants are well deployed to support the learning of lower-attaining students. Peer and self-assessment using student-friendly criteria helpfully supplement teachers' judgements.

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The school's specialist arts subjects very effectively support the increased focus on developing students' learning and thinking skills in Key Stage 3. The impact of this can be seen in students' increasing self-reliance and in the enthusiasm with which they coach each other. There is flexibility in the Key Stage 4 curriculum to meet the needs of the students. For example, a group of students struggling with product design were swiftly changed to a hospitality course with positive results. The school has well-embedded cross-curricular literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and the school's virtual learning environment facilitates good extra-curricular access to learning and is increasingly used by students and staff.

Support for students is extremely well targeted and the use of external agencies to help particularly vulnerable students is very effective. Arrangements for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well organised. The use of refined progress tracking systems allows for swift intervention and the impact of these interventions is evaluated, which then informs future practice. Students are guided well when making choices for Key Stage 4 options and the management of the transition for students entering the school in Year 7 is a strength. The number of looked-after students has increased and the school's use of a virtual learning environment for these students has helped them make good progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong leadership of the headteacher and her committed team, including the governing body, is a key factor in Ricards Lodge's recent improvements. The senior and middle leaders have worked tirelessly, reviewing schemes of work, placing students in groups by ability, refining the use of data to track progress and carefully targeting interventions. Staff have been deployed for the best possible outcomes, some of which are now outstanding, and monitoring procedures are now robust and rigorous. The headteacher's vision for the school is clear and she has gained a high level of commitment from her staff. The senior leaders are well aware of the key issues facing them and are taking firm action.

Annual departmental reviews give senior and middle leaders an accurate picture of current strengths and weaknesses, and support and resources are effectively targeted to address areas for improvement; teaching is improving as a result. Departmental development plans aspire towards outstanding practice. The history department in particular, whose performance was previously a cause for concern, has been turned around through this self-critical approach. There has been a shift of emphasis in the classroom from teaching

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towards students' learning and progress. This change of focus and the better use of assessment are already having a positive impact on students' outcomes.

The school's work within partnerships is a significant strength. Innovative projects include links with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the University of Warwick which have transformed the teaching of Shakespeare in Year 9.

The school has a good range of strategies for promoting community cohesion based on a thorough analysis of the local community and the wards in which its students live. It is hoped to widen access to the school for parents living some distance away and provide opportunities for students to learn about wider cultural and social issues which impact on learning. A recently completed evaluation of the impact of the community cohesion plan commissioned by the governing body in June 2010 shows that the school is making a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion within a local, national and international context. There is also a clear link between the community cohesion plan and the impact on teaching and learning in the school. The fact that there is little, if any, variation in performance between groups of students is testimony to the fact that the school's comprehensive equal opportunities policy is being successfully implemented.

Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust. The school provides regular training for all staff and pre-employment checks are thorough. The governing body is fully aware of its statutory duties.

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	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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

About 10% of parents and carers returned the questionnaire to the inspection team and a very large majority of these responded positively. All those who responded felt that the school keeps their children safe and an overwhelming majority felt that the school keeps

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them well informed about their child's progress and that their child's experience at the school is a positive one. Most believed that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. A small minority felt that the school does not encourage their children to lead healthy lifestyles. While there are many activities on offer which promote healthy lifestyles, inspectors agree that there is room for greater participation, especially from the older students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ricards Lodge High 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 129 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	38	73	57	6	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	46	67	52	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	63	49	64	50	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	47	36	73	57	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	24	85	66	8	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	28	81	63	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	19	83	64	15	12	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)	47	36	72	56	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	39	30	78	60	9	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	27	75	58	13	10	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	20	88	68	7	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	50	39	72	56	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	60	47	62	48	6	5	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

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



9 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ricards Lodge High School, Wimbledon, London SW19 7HB

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school. Ricards Lodge High School is a good school which encourages you to do well and has very high expectations of you as students. Because of this you make good progress in your lessons and are well prepared for the future.

Your behaviour is usually very good and you get on well with one another. You enjoy coming to school and once in school, you say you feel very safe. Your attendance is above average, but for a few of you your punctuality is not as good as it might be. It is clear that the overwhelming majority of you are happy with your school.

You make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community and many of you take full advantage of the extra-curricular activities which are on offer. Your school cares for you very well and offers you excellent guidance.

We have asked the school to maintain and accelerate the improvements that are being made in the teaching of mathematics and English to allow you to attain higher levels. We have also asked your teachers to make full use of the assessment information they have about you to make sure that the work they give you in lessons challenges you and meets your needs. For your part, you need to make sure that you follow your teachers' recommendations when they mark your work and that you play an active role during your learning.

The headteacher, leaders and other staff are doing an outstanding job in improving your school and are committed to getting the very best out of you. I wish you every success in school and for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell

Her Majesty's Inspector

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