

Redden Court School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	137396
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	386086
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Clare Gillies

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 of pupils on the school roll	655
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victor Bensilum
Headteacher	Paul Ward
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 lessons and, including assemblies and form time, about 35 teachers. Meetings were held with several groups of students, including members of the school council, as well as with members of the governing body, senior leaders, members of staff and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at lesson observation records, data about past and current standards and progress, subject reports presented to the governors, and safeguarding policies and procedures. They analysed questionnaires completed by 38 staff, 103 parents and carers, and 102 students chosen at random from all years.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Reasons for the relatively low percentage of GCSE A* and A grades and the dip in the percentage of girls attaining five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2011.
- The effectiveness of the various leadership and management changes and continuing professional development initiatives in relation to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The impact of some distinctive features of the school such as its Rainbow Nation work and steps towards becoming a 'Thinking School'. The latter includes lessons in personal and learning thinking skills in Years 7 and 8 and the promotion of 'Habits of Mind'.

Information about the school

The school became an academy in September 2011, in partnership with two other secondary schools in the local authority. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is almost double that seen nationally, although the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds, although increasing, is well below the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that seen nationally. There is a high number of looked-after children. Except in Year 9, boys outnumber girls. The school has recently attained the Bronze Investors in People award, a Safeguarding Standard Quality Mark and the Healthy School award. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing.

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

1

Main findings

The school's effectiveness is good. There has been a significant upward trend in achievement since the last inspection. Students are very happy and feel totally safe in school, reflected in their high attendance, enjoyment of lessons and outstanding behaviour. All the students who completed the inspection questionnaires agreed that they learn a lot in lessons and that adults explain how they can improve their work.

During the last two years, teaching has moved into a higher gear, with more outstanding practice and predominantly good learning. Teachers ask good questions but do not always extend students' responses in depth. A culture of high expectations permeates lessons and students know they are responsible for how well they achieve. Students know their target grades and their progress towards them is assessed half-termly, supporting their good achievement. Teachers value their professional development because it is supportive and practical; leadership and management of teaching and learning are outstanding and continue to contribute to improving standards.

Attainment is average and improving. Four years ago, only a third of students attained five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics. In 2010, well over half attained this measure. The percentage dropped slightly in 2011, as did the percentage of A* and A grades, but practically all students made the same good progress, as was seen in 2010. In 2011, girls' achievement in GCSE mathematics dipped. This was uncharacteristic, as now, in all years, girls are attaining at least average standards that are matching or exceeding those of boys. The great majority of students continue to make good progress. Those with low attainment on entry or special educational needs and/or disabilities follow specific programmes, to improve their literacy or numeracy skills for example. However, monitoring and adaptations do not always happen early or fast enough to accelerate their progress further. Staff and students are aware of the need to raise attainment further and the school has set ambitious targets.

Leadership and management are outstanding because the school's work since the last inspection has addressed all the areas for improvement in the last report and generated:

- higher standards, which are above average in some subjects, including English and science
- progress that exceeds that seen nationally in several subjects and consistently

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- exceeds predictions, based on students' standards on entry
- a better curriculum, with the introduction of worthwhile courses, such as engineering, which match students' abilities and interests
- more stimulating teaching and active and independent learning, and a teaching force which is determined to keep on improving.

This represents very rapid progress, and all these elements continue to have a high profile. They are underpinned by the confident and determined headteacher, deputy headteachers and directors, and a supportive and highly motivated staff. The governing body has tightened its committee structure; its members demand high standards and ask penetrating questions. Procedures for safeguarding are highly effective. The school has a very accurate evaluation of its strengths and areas for development in learning, and its assessment of what is needed to raise standards further is sharp and realistic. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To meet the ambitious target of 60% or more students attaining five GCSEs grades at A* to C including, English and mathematics in 2012:
 - increase the proportion of A* and A grades by ensuring that the most able students are set sufficiently challenging tasks
 - starting in Year 7, monitor regularly, and adapt as necessary, the range of programmes provided for the small minority of students with weak literacy and numeracy skills
 - build on the successful work already carried out to ensure that the gap between girls' and boys' achievement in 2011, particularly in mathematics, continues to narrow.

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

Girls' and boys' GCSE results have been similar in recent years. The gap in 2011, when boys outperformed girls by a large margin, was explained by several factors. These included some girls having very low attainment on entry, especially in numeracy, poor attendance and/or significant educational or emotional needs. The school has taken successful steps to ensure that effective support has been put in place and the gap between boys' and girls' achievement in mathematics is closing.

The very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds progress at least as well as others, achieving above-average GCSE results in 2011. The most-able students achieved well too but attained few A* and A grades, particularly in English. This is because the tasks set for these students in lessons are not always sufficiently challenging. Through the raising standards initiative, practically all students on free school meals, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and looked-after children attained five or more GCSE passes, plus other qualifications such as a work skills diploma.

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Students work well in lessons and participate enthusiastically. They stay focused working in pairs or groups, and enjoy tackling problems. The friendly, yet respectful, relationships between teachers and students underpin the purposeful atmosphere in lessons. In a religious education lesson, students relished using drama to explore different perspectives on the immortality of the soul. In a science lesson, they were imaginative in coming up with revision ideas, such as mind maps or a song!

Students fully understand the benefits of exercise, understand about ‘the heart pumping to be fit’ and know what constitutes a healthy diet. Many walk or cycle to school. They feel totally safe because bullying, which is extremely rare, is dealt with immediately and firmly. Many students, parents and carers, appreciating the school’s relatively small size, refer to a happy family community.

Through personal, social and health education, religious education and citizenship lessons, students study many valuable topics such as racism, controlling stress and e-safety. Their awareness of spiritual, moral and cultural issues is good and their social skills are excellent. Fixed-term exclusions are rare. The ‘Rainbow Nation’ project has significantly raised the profile of the school’s anti-racism work in the wider community, although the number of students directly involved in its development is small.

Prefects take on many positions of responsibility but younger students have fewer opportunities to lead school or community projects. The school council does not yet have a high profile, although the school responds well to students’ suggestions, for example, organising speakers to discuss knife crime. Students are generous in raising funds for charity.

Reflecting the school’s specialism, students’ information and communication technology skills are good and the school’s keen focus on strengthening their literacy and numeracy means that they are well prepared for their future studies and the world of work. Several talk enthusiastically about apprenticeships or the subjects they hope to study at university. In 2011, all Year 11 students moved on to a variety of worthwhile employment or education.

The school is actively working to be accredited as a ‘Thinking School’. Students in Years 7 and 8 have lessons in personal, learning and thinking skills which they value because they ‘help us to learn’ and ‘think outside the box’; Year 9 students enjoyed these lessons so much they wish they still had them! The ‘Habits of Mind’ programme is beginning to enrich students’ learning and communication skills, although it is too early to assess its impact on standards. Students mentioned appreciating the importance of ‘persistence’ and how to ‘focus on things’.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account:	2
	3

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Pupils' attainment ¹ 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	1
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?

An improved template has strengthened the quality of lesson planning so that teachers include a range of well-timed activities. Some teachers are adept at preparing for different levels of attainment and guiding the helpful teaching assistants to support learning effectively. Teachers use interactive whiteboards well to make lessons interesting. Just occasionally, they talk for too long or fail to pick up on interesting answers, or questions, posed by students.

Examples of outstanding teaching and learning were seen in the specialist subjects and others including:

- an extremely fast-paced mathematics lesson when the teacher skilfully and regularly checked understanding and anticipated errors
- a science lesson investigating a crime scene, because students appreciated the relevance to real life
- an ICT lesson where planning addressed students' differing needs so that they all made fast progress learning about email.

Teachers give students relevant feedback during lessons and encourage them to assess their own or others' work. The quality of marking and guidance has improved considerably in some subjects and the school knows the next step is to share the best practice. The push to make all teachers promote literacy is having a positive impact in many lessons, although occasionally a few teachers do not explore definitions or spellings enough.

The curriculum has been reorganised as students start GCSE courses in Year 9. The increase in vocational qualifications has helped many students to enjoy their 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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and achieve qualifications. Several subjects take students on visits and trips in the United Kingdom and abroad. Extra-curricular opportunities are numerous in sports but very few take place in music.

Looked-after children, and some who are carers, receive discreet, thoughtful and practical support so they enjoy school and make good progress. Students who find school life challenging follow the raising standards initiative which successfully helps them to gain qualifications. Parents and students praise the care and support they receive. Year 7 students settle in happily and appreciate having Year 11 buddies.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has undergone significant transformation and its reputation has improved, so it is now oversubscribed. The headteacher has raised standards by insisting that staff and students have high expectations and that standards and progress are monitored regularly and accurately; both are well established. The headteacher tackles any weaknesses in teaching firmly and is shrewd in appointing and nurturing talented teachers. Effective strategies have significantly improved attendance.

At the same time, the headteacher has boosted teachers' confidence and morale, as reflected in the comment from one teacher that 'this is the hardest-working school I have ever worked in but I love it'. Knowing their efforts are valued and supported, all staff have responded enthusiastically, welcoming advice and discussion about effective teaching styles and accepting responsibility for students' performance. Their replies to the staff questionnaires were exceptionally positive.

The recently restructured leadership team includes five directors who lead the school's key development areas, for example cognitive education or the 14–19 curriculum. This is an effective layer of leadership which complements the outstanding drive for improvement generated by the headteacher and the deputy headteachers.

Links through the partnership set up by the school's academy status are just beginning to generate external support and sharing of ideas, welcomed by staff. Links with feeder primary schools, further education and alternative education providers have all contributed to improved outcomes for students. Speakers from the

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police, for example, extend students’ broader education for life.

The school is very much part of the local community; several grandparents, parents and carers attended it in the past. Many are linked in to the school’s intranet which, along with the school newsletters, is interesting and informative. Attendance at parents’ evenings is high, and the Years 7 to 9 parenting skills course is much appreciated. Community cohesion is promoted effectively. The school has a good understanding of its local community’s make-up and contributes well to activities in local primary schools, for example. The school acknowledges that there is further work needed to extend students’ awareness of different cultures and communities in the UK. Students’ appreciation of the wider world is a focus of assemblies and subjects such as geography.

The governing body brings a wealth of relevant expertise to its work. It acknowledges that, in the last couple of years, it has made significant strides in how it challenges and supports the school. Safeguarding procedures and policies are outstanding, confirmed by a quality mark following an intensive external review of all aspects. Child protection issues are followed up meticulously. The promotion of equal opportunities underpins all the school’s work, through the widened curriculum choices, the quality of care for vulnerable students and external work such as the Rainbow Nation project. It is reflected in the respect students show for each other and how well they value diversity and respect different viewpoints.

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

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Views of parents and carers

An average percentage of parents returned the inspection questionnaire. Only a few wrote comments and almost all were positive. Parents noted how happily their children had settled in Year 7, the school's 'lovely community feeling' and that they were happy with their children's progress. The inspection confirmed their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Redden Court 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 103 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 655 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	52	48	47	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	60	41	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	52	50	50	49	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	49	53	51	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	47	46	55	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	41	57	55	4	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	29	71	69	2	2	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)	40	39	59	57	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	48	47	55	53	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	50	49	48	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	33	62	60	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	53	51	50	49	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	59	57	43	42	0	0	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Redden Court School, Romford, RM3 0TS

We thoroughly enjoyed the two days we spent with you and are sorry that we did not have the time to speak to more of you. Those of you we met described how much your school has improved in the last few years. We agree with you; it is now a good school and some aspects are outstanding. One of these is your behaviour – thank you for cheerfully opening doors and showing us where to go when we were lost! Those of you who completed the questionnaire before we arrived were very complimentary about everything the school offers. All said you felt safe at school, which confirmed our view that its safeguarding procedures are outstanding.

GCSE results shot up in 2009 and have been slightly above or below average since then. Normally girls' and boys' grades are very similar but, in 2011, girls did well in English but not in mathematics so that boys did much better overall. So to be sure the 2012 targets are met, we have asked the senior leaders to check the gender gap disappears and to ensure that any literacy or numeracy programmes you follow are effective. We trust those of you who are girls in Year 11 will work hard this year. We hope you will achieve more A* and A grades so we have asked teachers to be sure they give you challenging tasks and to extend your replies to their questions. You attend school regularly and work hard in lessons and we are sure you'll continue to do your best. It was encouraging to hear some of you in Year 9 saying that you wished you still had learning and thinking skills lessons as you found them so helpful.

The improvements we saw have been generated by your headteacher and senior leaders' determination and hard work, which are certainly outstanding. You are right to appreciate how well you are taught because we found your teachers were skilful, well motivated and very keen to help you do well; we saw a great deal of good learning during our visit.

We hope you will have good holidays when the festive season arrives next month, and happy and successful lives in the future.

Your sincerely

Clare Gillies
Lead inspector

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