

# Rydens Enterprise School and Sixth Form College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	137137
<b>Local authority</b>	Not applicable
<b>Inspection number</b>	397468
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,101
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	142
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Hicks
<b>Principal</b>	Nikki Knight
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18–19 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Hersham Road Walton-on-Thames KT12 5PY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01932 242994
<b>Fax number</b>	01932 252896
<b>Email address</b>	info@rydens.surrey.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	9–10 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	397468



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings

Additional inspector

Olson Davis

Additional inspector

David Howley

Additional inspector

Justina Ilochi

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out at one day's notice. The inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work including substantial parts of 49 lessons or tutorial sessions involving 45 teachers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, and looked at documents including those relating to safeguarding, students' assessment information and students' work. They held discussions with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students, and analysed questionnaires from 111 parents and carers, as well as those completed by a sample of staff and students.

## Information about the school

The large majority of students in this above average-sized secondary school are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is average and increasing, mainly as a result of an increase in the numbers joining the school from other parts of Europe. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average overall and a small minority come from areas of nationally recognised deprivation. The proportions of disabled students or those who have special educational needs and who are being supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average. Since the last inspection, there has been some turnover of staff at all levels, including at leadership level. The headteacher joined the school in January 2010, following a term's interim leadership and a number of senior leaders are new to their posts since the previous inspection. The school has an enterprise specialism and gained academy status in August 2011. The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- The school is satisfactory. There has been some fluctuation in students' GCSE results since the previous inspection but attainment is now rising across the school. The school's overall effectiveness is not graded good because the recent improvements in teaching have not yet led to good progress by students. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average which represents satisfactory achievement from their starting points. However, the progress of pupils who have special educational needs is not as consistent as their peers because provision is not always closely matched to their needs. For students of all abilities, progress in mathematics is not as strong as in English.
- The sixth form has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Students achieve well from a below average start in Year 12 and their attainment is in line with national averages.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Much good teaching was observed but some inconsistencies remain while teachers embed new approaches.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most students are well behaved and positive about their learning. In a few lessons, some low-level disruption slows the pace of learning for the whole class. The persistent absence of a few students has a negative impact on their achievement.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving as the capacity of leaders strengthens across the school. The headteacher has effectively used her experience to take robust action which has stemmed the decline in attendance. Well-targeted performance management and support are improving teaching and students' achievement. The school's plans for improvement are matched well to an accurate self-evaluation, showing its capacity for further improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement across the curriculum, and particularly in mathematics, by improving teaching so that it consistently:
  - uses the information from assessments to match the tasks set for students more closely to their existing levels of attainment
  - helps students to strengthen their thinking and independent learning skills
  - provides more opportunities for students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Increase the progress made by students who have special educational needs by ensuring that the evaluations of intervention programmes are used to target the next stages for their support.
- Improve attendance throughout the school by working closely with the students who are persistently absent to increase their attendance to at least match the national average.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students make satisfactory progress in the main school and good progress in the sixth form. Almost all parents and carers responding to the questionnaire are positive about the progress students make. Although students' attainment has risen, the rate of increase in the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes including English and mathematics is not as strong as nationally. The variability in students' attainment since the previous inspection partly reflects different characteristics of each cohort, for example in the proportion who have special educational needs or significant health difficulties. However, for a number of years, students with special educational needs have made less progress from their starting points than their peers and similar groups of students nationally. The school's tracking data show that the action taken this year is successfully accelerating the pace of learning across all groups of students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. Now that staffing has stabilised, performance in mathematics is improving, although it is not yet as strong as in English and most other subjects. Changes to the science curriculum have resulted in significant improvements in an area of weakness identified in the previous report. Similarly, improvements in history mean that a previously weaker subject is now a strength of the school.

Most students have positive attitudes to learning. This is indicated in both discussion and the questionnaire in which they confirmed that they learn a lot in school. Because they have a good understanding of the quality and level of their work, students know what they have to do to improve further and try to apply this in new work. In lessons preparing students for forthcoming GCSE examinations, they develop their confidence well by considering carefully what they have to do to achieve a higher grade. In the majority of lessons, students are engaged by their activities, show perseverance and develop independent learning skills. In a history lesson, Year 11 students consolidated their knowledge about public health in the

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sixteenth century because the teacher's probing questioning enabled them to work things out for themselves. There are many examples where pupils take care with their presentation and use their literacy skills effectively in other subjects, but this is not consistent across the school. In a few lessons, students remain passive when they are presented with a challenging task, waiting for the teacher or a teaching assistant to guide them through their activity. Consequently, although work is completed, students' progress is superficial and their learning lacks sufficient depth for them to retain new knowledge or skills. This is particularly the case for lower-attaining groups where, on occasion, teachers lack the confidence to use a range of strategies to meet their needs fully. Sometimes in these lessons, students' weak reading and writing skills slows the pace of their learning.

**Quality of teaching**

Almost all parents and carers indicate satisfaction with the school's teaching and students say that it is mostly good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to capture students' interest and make learning enjoyable. This is reflected in the way sixth form students quickly engage in debate at the beginning of lessons, taking a pride in recalling earlier learning and sharing with the teacher how their thinking has developed between lessons. While there is much good teaching across the whole school to form the basis for further development, there are inconsistencies. These weaker elements are not related to any particular subject, although there is less good teaching in mathematics than in many other subjects. Teaching and support for those students who may have disabilities, and for those with special educational needs, is satisfactory enabling them to make the same rates of progress as others in their year groups.

Lessons generally, but not always, ensure that students of all abilities have activities which challenge them so that they are motivated by their success. In the best lessons, teachers give students regular opportunities to reflect on and assess their own outcomes and use this information expertly to ensure that the tasks set are closely matched to students' earlier learning. For example, in a technology lesson, students were challenged to combine their skills in working with wood and plastic to make trophies. The teacher helped them to review how successfully they were achieving their personal objectives part way through the lesson. Those who were making slower progress were required to refocus their efforts while those who had already achieved their goal were given additional challenges. However, sometimes teachers do not have such high expectations of what students can do for themselves, and activities do not give students enough opportunities to articulate their ideas in groups to deepen their thinking and develop skills of independence.

The school has recognised that students do not always have enough opportunities to strengthen their reading and writing skills, which are below average on entry to the school, in subjects across the curriculum. A comprehensive approach to address the issue is developing satisfactorily, although the skills of a few teachers to boost literacy skills are rather limited. Intervention programmes to boost the reading levels of students identified as in need of specific support show some successful outcomes.

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## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school is calm and orderly. Most parents, carers and students believe that the school is a safe place. Inspectors found typical behaviour to be satisfactory. The success of revised approaches to behaviour management, with an emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own actions, is evident in students commenting that behaviour has improved. However, a few, mainly older, students do not always meet the school's expectations. A higher than usual proportion of parental and student questionnaires indicated that lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors found that this was rare. The school's records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour such as cyber-bullying and racist or homophobic language have reduced significantly over the last year. A recent incident of cyber-bullying was dealt with rapidly and effectively when the incident was reported. Such improvements in the action taken to address unacceptable behaviour are reflected in the reduced numbers of exclusions. The recently opened 'Cottage' provides a safe sanctuary for those experiencing particular problems such as emotional difficulties or returning to school after a long period of absence. Following a declining trend, attendance has begun to improve and is now average. However, an above average proportion of students, particularly amongst students who have special educational needs, are persistently absent. Tracking records show that this has an adverse impact on their achievements.

## **Leadership and management**

After a period of significant staff changes, which may in part explain the school's erratic attainment profile, the school has settled into a phase of carefully planned development. The current improvements in students' progress indicate the strengths that leaders, governors and managers at all levels are bringing to school development, but new initiatives are not sufficiently embedded to be reflected in a sustained period of improvement. However, the school's success in addressing the issues identified in the previous inspection, including sixth form provision and outcomes, shows its capacity for improvement. The headteacher provides clear direction in raising the aspirations of the whole school community, and this is seen in students' contribution to the new motto 'believe, achieve, succeed'. Change has been managed carefully so that most parents and carers are positive about students' experiences at school. Curriculum changes include more opportunities for practical learning, such as in science, and are ensuring that students are adequately prepared for the next stages of their lives. The school's refocusing of the enterprise specialism as part of its conversion to academy status is making a positive contribution to developing students' personal and learning skills. For example, many local business and industry partners help students to develop a range of skills including study, teamwork and problem solving skills. Such activities deepen students' spiritual, social and moral understanding well as they think through issues and problems; all of which helps them to prepare for the world of work.

The school's key focus has been on raising students' attainment by improving

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teaching. A programme of challenge and support for teachers has addressed shortcomings and has led to measurable improvements, so that very little teaching is inadequate. The governing body is fully involved in setting priorities for improvement and is rigorous in carrying out its statutory duties, including ensuring that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and are effective. The school is now proactively using the information from students' assessments to tackle areas of underperformance or potential discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity. For example, the school commissioned an external review into the reasons for the weaker progress made by students with special educational needs. This is now driving a strategic approach to ensure that specific interventions are evaluated and the information used to plan the next stages of support for this group of students.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



11 May 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Rydens Enterprise School and Sixth Form College, Walton-on-Thames KT12 5PY**

Thank you for your welcome and positive contributions to the discussions we had during our visit to your school. The school is providing you with a satisfactory quality of education. In the questionnaire that some of you completed, most of you indicated that the school helps you to do well. We judge that the school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education and can do even better.

Here are some of the things we found during the inspection:

- Your progress is satisfactory, so that the school's achievement for the proportion gaining good GCSE grades in English and mathematics is in line with the national average.
- Although improving, you are not yet making as much progress in mathematics as in English and most of your other subjects.
- You told us that behaviour is improving and that you have higher expectations of one another. Although some of you indicated that lessons are occasionally disrupted, we did not find any evidence of serious disruption. We did, however, find that a few, mainly older, students do not always behave as the school expects.
- Attendance has improved well this year, but there are still too many students with poor attendance and this is reflected in their weaker achievement.

To help the school to improve, we have asked senior leaders to increase your attainment and progress, particularly in mathematics, by: ensuring that your work is always pitched at the right level; you have more activities to develop your thinking and independent learning skills; improving literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum; and following up the special programmes for those of you who find learning more difficult to make sure that you have the right ongoing help.

We hope that you continue to do your best and attend regularly unless there is a very good reason to be absent.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings  
Lead inspector

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