

Rainham School for Girls

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136456
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382054
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Robert Ellis HMI

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1549
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Mann
Headteacher	Karen Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 May 2009
School address	Derwent Way Rainham Kent ME8 0BX
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Robert Ellis	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Barker	Additional inspector
Carol Evatt	Additional inspector
Roger Fenwick	Additional inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 46 lessons taught by 45 different teachers, and held discussions with the members of the governing body, a representative from the academy trust, groups of students, a group of parents and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at improvement plans, records of the school's monitoring of teaching, the school's tracking data showing students' progress, teachers' lesson plans, and samples of students' work. Joint lesson observations were conducted with senior staff. In addition, inspectors analysed the questionnaire responses of 320 parents and carers, 110 staff and 167 students, and took their views into account.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average, non-selective secondary school in an area where selection by ability takes place. Most students are White British, with around one in ten coming from a mix of minority ethnic backgrounds. Around one in ten students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs, is above average overall but below average in some year groups. Their needs predominantly relate to moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has a sixth form which is partially federated with two other local schools.

The academy 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

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because further improvement is needed to teaching and learning. The sixth form is good and improving.
- The achievement of most students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, is good.
- Teaching is good overall and improving. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen and teachers have high expectations of what their students can achieve. In many lessons, the development of students' literacy skills is promoted adequately but speaking and listening are underdeveloped. Students do not have consistent opportunities to develop independence and resilience in all subjects.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the academy is good and the academy is a calm and orderly place. Attendance has improved to above average and most students say they enjoy school. There are effective arrangements for ensuring students are safe and can recognise and respond to risks. Students say that they feel safe and are seldom subjected to bullying or other forms of harassment.
- Senior leaders have secured improvement since the last inspection and have an ambitious vision for the academy and its students. Teachers' performance is managed very effectively and teachers are encouraged and enabled to develop their practice in order to improve outcomes for students. Management information systems provide a detailed picture of students' academic progress, but other aspects of their development are not tracked and analysed as effectively.
- The curriculum is innovative and meets students' needs and helps to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The academy has very productive partnerships to support learning and development. Positive relationships with parents and carers are developing and the academy is endeavouring to help them to be more involved their children's learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching consistently promotes students' independence and resilience by:
 - engaging students more actively in their learning and ensuring they are able to contribute more to achieving their challenging targets
 - providing consistent opportunities for collaboration so that students can develop their communication skills, particularly speaking and listening
 - ensuring students at all levels are enabled to develop and apply their literacy skills in all areas of the curriculum.
- Ensure that all aspects of students' achievements and personal development are monitored and evaluated consistently and systematically in order to better inform improvement planning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Achievement is good, including in the sixth form, and is improving strongly. Most students now reach standards that are at least in line with national averages in most subjects.

Good teaching, combined with students' increasingly positive attitudes and good relationships, ensures students make rapid progress towards achieving their challenging targets. There are no significant differences in the outcomes for the different groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Most, but not all, groups make better progress than similar groups nationally.

In lessons, most students enjoyed learning and made predominantly good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Scrutiny of their work and discussions with students show that over the last two years progress has been accelerating and around three quarters of pupils achieve challenging targets. Students' positive relationships with teachers and other adults ensure most lessons proceed smoothly and students say that lessons are seldom disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported particularly well, and most make good progress in relation to their starting points and abilities.

Most students have communication and numeracy skills which are appropriate for their ages. However, some students in all year groups have literacy skills which are underdeveloped, particularly speaking, listening and writing. Although some lessons promote literacy development well, there remains some variation in the extent to which students have good opportunities to develop and apply their literacy skills across the different subjects they study.

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Quality of teaching

Overall, teaching is good. Most teachers use their high levels of subject expertise to good effect to motivate and engage students. Regular and accurate assessment ensures that teachers know the level that students are working at and can set targets that are challenging but achievable. The best lessons are delivered at a brisk pace, and teachers use questioning well to determine what students have understood and to help them improve their thinking skills. Many teachers make excellent use of a broad range of different interesting activities to promote learning.

The good teaching and support provided for disabled students and those who have special education needs help to develop their confidence and enable them to overcome barriers to learning.

Many lessons provide good opportunities for students to collaborate, to discuss the challenges they have been set and to evaluate their own work. There are a few lessons where opportunities for discussion are missed and where most communication is mediated through the teacher. In these lessons, students are prevented from developing their communication skills and levels of engagement are lower.

Behaviour around the academy has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Students seldom require more than gentle prompting from staff to modify their behaviour, and exclusions and behaviour incidents have reduced significantly. Behaviour in lessons to support learning, although improving, is not developed fully and a small number of students are too passive and need frequent prompting to re-engage them with their learning.

Most parents and carers, staff and students who responded to the inspection questionnaires judged behaviour in school and in lessons to be good. A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour in lessons but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that lessons are frequently disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. Students said that the behaviour observed around the school on the two days of the inspection is what they normally experience.

Attendance has improved since the last inspection and the academy has been successful in supporting and challenging many students who previously had poor attendance.

Students say that there is very little bullying now and any that does take place is dealt with promptly and successfully. Parents and carers, including those who spoke with inspectors, expressed the view that their children were looked after well, made good progress and felt safe at the academy.

Most students say they feel safe and are confident that there are adults who will help them deal with any issues that arise. Students demonstrate a good understanding of how to manage the risks that they might face. For example, they were clear about

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potential hazards associated with the use of the internet and mobile telephones, particularly in relation to cyber-bullying. Students, especially those in the sixth form, spoke very highly of the guidance and support they receive and felt that they were well placed to make informed choices about their futures.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the academy and many people that inspectors spoke to, including staff, students and parents and carers, attribute the rapid pace of improvement to her outstanding and inspirational leadership. There is a clear focus on continuous improvement and much good work has been done to develop capacity for further improvement. The quality of its self-evaluation and improvements since the previous inspection demonstrate that the academy has capacity for further improvement.

Performance management is a particular strength of the academy and the headteacher and her senior team have been unyielding in challenging and supporting teachers and other staff to improve their practice. Leaders and managers at all levels have clear roles and responsibilities and a shadow structure has been created to prepare staff for stepping up to the next level in leadership and management. Staff have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities and this is helping to develop their practice and promote improvement.

The governing body has adopted a more strategic role and has developed its capacity to challenge and support the school, which is aiding improvement.

The academy is developing a curriculum that suitably meets students' needs and which reflects the academy's priorities for improvement. Changes have been made to the transition point where students move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 to create an extended Key Stage 4. This is a recent innovation and it is too soon to judge the impact on students' achievement; early indicators suggest it has had a marked impact on improving student motivation in Year 9. Other changes have resulted in more effective provision for the most able students. Sixth form consortium arrangements provide students with a wide range of options and students speak positively about their experiences in the sixth form.

Rigorous and effective systems have been implemented to track pupils' academic progress and remedy any underperformance. Other aspects of students' development, for example behaviour and achievement outside of lessons, are not monitored and evaluated with the same rigour and this prevents the academy from having a truly comprehensive overview of learning and development across the academy.

Equality of opportunity is promoted strongly and discrimination in any form is challenged vigorously. Consequently, the academy is a calm, orderly and harmonious community.

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All aspects of pupils' personal development are promoted well, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good pastoral care makes a significant contribution to students' achievement and ensures that students are prepared well for moving on to the next stage in their lives. Individual parents and carers spoke very highly of the excellent support they have received when dealing with particularly sensitive issues.

Strong partnerships, for example with other local schools and health and social care professionals, contribute to students' learning and development. The academy provides parents and carers with useful information about their children's achievements and most parents and carers express positive views about the work of the academy.

Safeguarding arrangements ensure students are kept safe and exceed current statutory requirements.

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).

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Rainham School for Girls, Rainham ME8 0BX

Thank you for being extremely welcoming and helpful when we visited your academy. My particular thanks go to all of you who took time to fill out our questionnaire or to talk to us about your experiences at the academy. We found that yours is a good academy that cares for you well.

Most of you now work harder in lessons and make good progress in your learning and development. We were pleased to see that most of you enjoy lessons and you told us you feel safe. The academy has good arrangements to ensure that you are kept safe and secure. Behaviour in lessons is often good, but sometimes a few students do not concentrate enough and ask for help before they need it or need frequent reminders to keep working. Teachers make sure that work is set at the right level for you and they give you good advice about how you can improve and reach your targets. Adults who are responsible for improving the school know what needs to be done and work very hard to help you achieve as well as you can.

We are asking you and the academy to do some things to help you learn more effectively.

- We would like you to be more active in lessons and less reliant on the teacher. Have more opportunities to collaborate and work together so that you can practise and develop your communication skills and have opportunities in all lessons to improve and apply your literacy skills.
- We want the academy to track and analyse all aspects of your progress and development so that leaders know precisely what is working well and what needs to be done to improve further.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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