

Roding Valley High School

Alderton Hill, Loughton, IG10 3JA

Inspection dates

28 February – 1 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Achievement is good. Most students now make good progress over time and achieve well.
- A pattern of achievement has now been established where average GCSE grades improving and are above average.
- Most lessons feature good learning with a significant minority that are outstanding. Most lessons are planned well and challenge and enthuse the students.
- Recent significant improvements in marking and assessment procedures contribute well to improved progress over time. Students are now provided with better and clearer information about their work and what they need to do to improve.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Attendance is improving well and exclusions have fallen significantly. Students are polite and committed to their work. They feel safe and valued and their exemplary conduct contributes well to rapidly improving outcomes.
- The headteacher offers clear, strong and visionary leadership. Progress has been rapid since his appointment in January 2010.
- The leadership's strong emphasis on monitoring the quality of teaching and learning has seen many improvements and has helped to ensure that learning is now good.
- The school benefits from a highly effective and committed Governing Body. Governors know the school well. They are highly supportive, with high expectations for future improvements. Staff, at all levels, are effectively held to account.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some inconsistencies remain in the marking and assessment of students' work, especially in relation to the correcting of inaccurate spelling and punctuation.
- There are inconsistencies across subjects in promoting the students' skills in reading and writing, especially in writing in an extended form and for different audiences.
- In science students are offered too few opportunities to learn for themselves through undertaking investigations and practical work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 46 lessons, each involving a different teacher. Many lessons were jointly observed with senior members of staff. In addition, a number of other lessons were visited to determine how well the needs of specific students are planned for, to look at the quality of marking and assessment and the help offered to students to improve their work
- Meetings were held with four different student groups and with three members of the Governing Body, including the Chair. Meetings were also held with many different members of staff, including senior leaders and heads of departments. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 95 responses to the on-line inspection questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Fifty-six responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- Inspectors scrutinised examples of students' past and present work and looked at various documents. These included the school's self-evaluation and planning, information on students' academic progress and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Felsenstein	Additional Inspector
Joanna Jones	Additional Inspector
David Lewis	Additional Inspector
Sarah Murrell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by their local authority or who have a parent in the armed services) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is close to the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic families and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are well below national averages
- The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which determines the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school does not make any use of any alternative off-site provision for students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement further so that by the end of the current academic year learning is at least good in all lessons by ensuring that:
 - the good and outstanding marking and assessment practice seen in many lessons is spread to all, especially when correcting students' inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation
 - students are consistently offered opportunities to develop their skills in reading and writing and opportunities to write at length and for different audiences are fully developed across all subjects
 - in science classes there are more opportunities for students to learn by undertaking investigations for themselves and doing more practical work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- GCSE results have shown a good trend of improvement, especially in mathematics, over the last three years. Though English results dipped in 2012, evidence from lesson observations and from students' work, strongly suggest that outcomes will improve further. Most students are working at levels that are above what is expected given their broadly average starting points. All groups, including those from minority ethnic communities or those who speak English as an additional language, are making good progress.
- The performance gap in English is proving harder to address but the school is taking many appropriate steps, including changing GCSE options and the time when students actually sit their GCSE English examinations. Their average points scores are rising and gaps in performance are being closed.
- The school effectively uses additional funding made available through the pupil premium or the new Year 7 catch-up funding for students who failed to reach the national expectation in Year 6. Younger students are now making good progress and are improving their attainment through the additional support they receive. Students receiving the pupil premium do better than such students nationally, including in English and mathematics, because specifically funded and targeted support enables them to close the gap in attainment with other students.
- Careful targeting of additional support for disabled students and those with special educational needs sees these students making good gains in their learning and narrowing the attainment gap with other students over time.
- All students are set challenging, but realistic targets for all their subjects. Their progress against such targets is carefully and closely monitored. These procedures have improved well since the previous inspection. Such careful and detailed checking of individual performance has contributed well to improving outcomes.
- The school carefully evaluates its policy with regard to early examination entry. Individual students will only be entered early for a GCSE examination if there is compelling evidence that a high grade will be secured. As a general policy, the school does not promote early examination entry.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow non-GCSE vocational courses. The school's analysis shows that the progress and achievements of these students are good. Such planning for individual needs provides better opportunities for the students concerned to progress to further education or the work at the end of Year 11.
- Well in excess of 90 per cent of parents replying to the inspection questionnaire confirmed that their children are making at least good progress. Inspection evidence endorses this view.

The quality of teaching is good

- In most lessons, and over time, learning is at least good. In a significant number of lessons, learning is outstanding.
- Students frequently learn well because staff expectations about what students can do and achieve are realistic. In many lessons staff successfully challenge students and extended their

knowledge and understanding. In a minority of lessons that require improvement, staff need to ensure greater consistency in the marking and assessment of work, especially in relation to ensuring students' use of grammar is correct and their spellings are accurate.

- Further improvements in learning can be made by ensuring that in all subjects students are given sufficient opportunities to write in an extended form and for different audiences. In science further gains in learning can be achieved by giving students more investigative tasks and ensuring that there are no missed opportunities for practical work.
- In most lessons, and over time, good learning is promoted successfully because pace is appropriate, students are given ample scope to work independently and in small groups, and the work set challenges and engages them.
- Students' good achievement and learning are further aided by the quality of the target setting and monitoring procedures that are now well-embedded. This aspect feature has improved well since the previous inspection. All students are aware of their target grades in every subject they study. They also are given clear guidance on how to improve if their current work is below expectations.
- Outstanding teaching and learning were seen in a variety of subjects. Year 8 boys made outstanding progress in a gymnastics lesson. The success of this lesson was due to earlier work, where they had established safe routines and had mastered key movements such as somersaults well. In this lesson, progress was rapid as they applied their prior learning and choreographed their own complex routines.
- Outstanding learning featured in a challenging Year 11 English lesson on poetry. The lesson was planned well and offered students considerable challenge. All were involved and engaged. The development of thinking and analysis skills were clearly illustrated in the high quality of the students' oral work. Learning was enhanced further by the teacher's carefully structured questions which successfully took learning to higher levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Many students told inspectors that the school is happy, harmonious and improving. Many offered the opinion that it has never been better; students behave very well and examples of anti-social behaviour such as bullying and name calling are rare.
 - Behaviour over time, around the school and in lessons, is outstanding. Students are respectful and courteous and are willing to offer help to one another. Such high quality behaviour makes a highly effective contribution to their good progress and achievements, as well as ensuring a peaceful and harmonious working environment.
 - Students have positive attitudes to learning, with many making reference to how much the school, especially in terms of behaviour and attendance, has improved over the last two or three years. As one Year 11 student commented, 'We are now proud of our school.'
 - Though a small minority of parents in the inspection questionnaire expressed reservations about behaviour, students from all year groups reported that they feel safe, respected and well-cared for. They made reference to the high levels of respect that exist between students and between students and staff.
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- Incidents of bullying based on race, sexual orientation or name calling are rare. If they occur, they are quickly, thoroughly and sensitively dealt with. Older students emphasised that on the rare occasions incidents occur, work undertaken by staff not only focuses on helping the victim, detailed support is given to the perpetrator so that unacceptable behaviour will not be repeated.
- Students of all ages know how to stay safe and avoid the misuse of drugs and alcohol for example. The school's well planned personal, social and health education programme ensures that everyone is given ample information about how to lead safe and healthy lives. There is also a comprehensive programme to promote e-safety. Students are given detailed information to foster the safe and beneficial use of modern technology.
- Further evidence of outstanding behaviour is reflected in the rapidly improving attendance rate and the decline in persistent absent. Fixed term exclusions are also falling at a rapid rate. It was noticeable on a large and dispersed site, that punctuality to lessons was high. Such attitudes make a healthy contribution to the good levels of achievement.

The leadership and management are good

- This school is improving rapidly because of the clear, decisive and visionary leadership of the headteacher. He is well supported by his senior staff, his strong Governing Body and by the staff who are fully committed to making the school even more successful.
- Morale is very high. In their questionnaires many staff commented favourably on the recent improvements. There have been a number of staff changes. Some members of the senior team are new in post and some key department leadership posts are being led by staff who are new to the school. Despite the pace of change, staff have remained positive and they are keen to play their role in securing even more improvements.
- Self-evaluation is most effective. Procedures to check and evaluate how well the school is performing are embedded and strengths and areas for further development are readily identifiable.
- The provision for staff development is good and teaching and learning are managed well. This is reflected in learning that is mainly good, with a significant element that is outstanding.
- Improvements in examination results and students' excellent attitudes to learning can be partly attributed to careful planning that ensures a wide variety of subjects are available especially in Years 10 and 11. Many students have individually designed study programmes that meet their needs successfully. The range of experiences available contributes well to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps to ensure there is a genuine commitment to equality of opportunity, fostering of good relations and the tackling of discrimination irrespective of ethnicity or home language.
- Senior leaders have identified that some students have lower than expected skills in literacy and/or mathematics. Additional funding made available through the pupil premium is being used well to raise basic standards of literacy and numeracy, through additional lessons for example.
- Additional funding is also utilised to ensure that all students, including the most vulnerable, can access all aspects of the school's extensive provision, including taking a full part in educational

visits. Good arrangements for safeguarding help ensure safety in and out of school.

- The school has a good record of working successfully with its local authority. The quality of this partnership work has contributed well to school's improved outcomes.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors have a realistic understanding of just how well the school is performing. They know that teaching and learning has improved considerably and they rightly judge that the education provided is good. They know the school's strengths and where further improvements are necessary. They hold the headteacher and all other members of staff to account for the school's performance. They carefully analyse outcomes, including examination results, and they are fully involved in ensuring that there is a close link between salary progression and the effectiveness of classroom teaching. Through their training, they are aware of how performance management works. They thoroughly monitor expenditure, including the way extra funding through the pupil premium is spent. They are justifiably proud of the good and improving school they represent.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115235
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	401505

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Wershof
Headteacher	Paul Banks
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2010
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