

Rydon Community College

Rock Road, Thakeham, Storrington, RH20 3AA

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- All groups of students achieve well from their starting points. Standards in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are above average by the time they leave at the end of Year 8.
- The headteacher, governors and leaders across the school have high expectations and an unswerving commitment to the success of every pupil. Consequently, teaching and achievement continue to improve.
- Teaching motivates students and provides good opportunities for discussion and collaboration. The proportion that is outstanding is increasing.
- Students are proud of their school. Most love learning and participate enthusiastically in the wide range of activities and experiences offered. The school promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well.
- Students feel completely safe and behave well. They are highly appreciative of the outstanding care, guidance and support that they receive from staff.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers understand that they are accountable for students' progress and everyone works hard in the best interests of students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching assistants are not equally effective in promoting students' progress in lessons.
- Occasionally tasks are not set at the right level for students.
- Opportunities for students to show initiative are missed in some lessons.
- Questioning is not always probing enough to extend students' thinking.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning were observed in 30 lessons and students' work was examined, especially in English and mathematics. Some observations were joint visits with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with staff, students and three members of the school's governing body. There was also a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. One meeting with students was dedicated to a discussion of reading, with an opportunity for students to read aloud. Informal discussions with students took place at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 121 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 41 staff questionnaires. Parents' involvement in school life was discussed with senior leaders.
- A range of documentation was looked at, including records relating to students' progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jacqueline White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Roger Parry

Additional Inspector

Carolyn Steer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average middle-deemed-secondary school. There are more boys than girls.
- Most students are White British. Relatively few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children with a parent or carer serving in the armed forces and students known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school specialises in science and enterprise. It also holds several awards including Enhanced Healthy Schools status and the Eco Green Flag award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - making sure that teaching is based on what students already know and understand so that the tasks they are set are neither too easy nor too hard for them
 - providing students with more opportunities to show initiative and develop independence in their learning
 - ensuring teachers use questioning effectively to develop students' understanding and their ability to think for themselves
 - ensuring teaching assistants are equally skilful at promoting students' progress in lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter Year 6 with broadly average levels of attainment. All groups of students make good progress during their time in school and attainment is above average at the end of Year 8. Most of the parents and carers who responded to Parent View are entirely satisfied with the progress their children are making.
- The school's reliable data and inspection evidence, including lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work, demonstrate that achievement is continuing to speed up. The school reviews the progress of individual students regularly, and, if there is any indication of underachievement, effective tailored interventions help them to catch up.
- The progress of different groups of students is also tracked carefully to ensure that they do equally well. For example, boys make the same good progress as girls.
- The relatively small amount of pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide personal and academic support to eligible students. As a result, they do as well as their classmates in both English and mathematics and there are no gaps in their attainment.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well as a result of the excellent care, high-quality support programmes and established partnerships with external agencies that supplement their classroom experiences.
- The few students from ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language thrive and achieve very well. This reflects the school's staunch commitment to equality of opportunity and rejection of all forms of discrimination.
- Reading is given a high priority. Students read for a variety of purposes in lessons and most enjoy books. Where appropriate, students benefit from extra support with reading. In discussion with some of those who had received help, students talked with pleasure about the books they were currently reading. They happily read aloud and showed some persistence in working out new words.
- Students are well prepared for the future and very secure in their use of literacy and numeracy skills when they leave school in Year 9.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most teachers create a very positive atmosphere for learning so students are enthusiastic about their lessons. There is a strong sense of purpose in learning and students are given a clear idea of what they must do to succeed. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson where students were studying *Macbeth*, they were able to give each other precise feedback about how to improve their work because they had discussed it in detail and agreed what an effective piece of work would look like.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of how rapidly and independently students can learn. Thoughtful planning means that students are appropriately challenged. There are good opportunities for students to cooperate together in pairs and small groups and to evaluate their own and others' work. Questioning is used well to stimulate students' interest and develop their understanding. Activities are creative and allow students to find things out on their own and exercise some control over how they learn and complete tasks. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school.
- Where teaching is less effective, tasks are not matched well to students' needs so that work is too easy for some and too hard for others. Questioning is undemanding and does not encourage students to think for themselves. In addition, opportunities for students to take the initiative in their learning and find things out for themselves are sometimes missed.
- Some teaching assistants are highly effective in accelerating students' progress in lessons because they have been involved in the planning and understand how they can help very well. This good practice has not been fully shared, which means that not all teaching assistants have

such a positive impact on students' learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel very safe in school. The warm and caring relationships are an important factor in their strong sense of belonging. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with swiftly. Students trust the adults in the school and feel that they can share any problems with them.
- Students talk knowledgeably about what constitutes unsafe situations and how to deal with them or avoid them. They understand fully the dangers posed by inappropriate use of the internet and social-networking sites.
- Students benefit from the exceptional range of after-school activities and experiences. They develop good leadership skills and confidence in themselves through taking part in enterprise days and residential trips, for example to Iceland.
- Good judgement and a clear appreciation of right and wrong are fostered through the many openings that students have to discuss and reflect on the choices that people face throughout their lives. Difference and individuality are respected throughout the school.
- The school's behaviour policy is well established. This has resulted in a marked reduction in the use of sanctions, such as detentions. In recent years, there have been no permanent exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly. Very occasionally, there is some minor misbehaviour but the school's records show that consideration and courtesy are the norm.
- Students' attendance is above average and it is improving.
- Nearly all the parents and carers who completed Parent View questionnaire agreed that the school makes sure that students behave well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for all the students, their families and the wider community. Senior leaders, governors and all staff share her determined commitment to supporting and challenging all students to achieve their academic and personal goals, whatever their circumstances. Consequently, although not yet outstanding, students' achievement is rising steadily.
- The headteacher has communicated a clear vision for improving teaching and learning which is shared by all. Leaders and managers challenge teaching that is not of the very best quality and skilled school staff work with others to share the good practice that is in the school.
- Leaders at all levels contribute to the accurate evaluation of how well the school is doing. Leaders of subject areas are very actively involved in checking the quality of the work of their teams but some are still gaining experience in these skills.
- The way the school manages teachers' performance is clear to all and robust. It is firmly linked to salary progression and identifies for reward only those teachers who teach consistently well. High-quality training is well tailored to improve teaching.
- The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students very successfully. It helps them develop their skills effectively, particularly their literacy and numeracy skills, and prepares them well for life in a diverse society.
- The impressive range of extra-curricular activities is extremely popular and makes a strong contribution to students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good access to specialist resources and new technologies helps to sustain students' enjoyment and interest in learning. The high quality resources support the progress of Year 6 students particularly well.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all current statutory requirements.
- Parents and carers who completed Parent View were unanimous in saying they would

recommend the school to other prospective parents and carers.

■ The local authority provides light-touch support for this good and improving school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- As a result of reviewing its capacity to drive school improvement, the governing body has been restructured and is now far more authoritative in setting the strategic direction of the school.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They support the school very well and are never afraid to ask searching questions about performance in all areas of the school's life, including students' progress and attainment. This includes making comparisons with the performance of similar institutions and the national picture.
 - Governors keep a close eye on the impact of strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and make sure that performance management arrangements are fair and secure. As a result, teachers only receive financial reward if they meet their challenging targets for their students' progress. They know what is being done to tackle any underperformance.
 - Governors manage the school's budget astutely and evaluate how the use of resources benefits students. They oversee the spending of pupil premium funding and ensure that it supports the learning and development of eligible students.
 - Governors take part regularly in training to keep abreast of developments and extend their skills.
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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 students' needs. This ensures that students 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 students' needs. Students 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 students 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	126067
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340912

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	10–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	409
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melanie Granville
Headteacher	Allison Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 November 2009
Telephone number	01903 744138
Fax number	01903 740300
Email address	amurphy@wsgfl.org.uk

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