



Riddlesdown High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101818
LEA Croydon LEA
Inspection number 276595
Inspection dates 28 September 2005 to 29 September 2005
Reporting inspector Brian Evans AI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Honister Heights
School category	Voluntary aided		Purley
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Surrey CR8 1EX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02086685136
Number on roll	1555	Fax number	02086609025
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr A J E Carter
Date of previous inspection	15 February 2000	Headteacher	Dr D R Dibbs

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 28 September 2005 - 29 September 2005	Inspection number 276595
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Riddlesdown High is a voluntary-aided school and has been accredited as a Specialist Science College since September 2004. It is a popular mixed comprehensive school. Nearly 80% are from white British backgrounds and just over 4% speak English as an additional language. There is 16-19 provision on the same site which the school administers in partnership with a neighbouring college. Few pupils come from homes experiencing economic hardship, and the number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is low for a much bigger than average secondary school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The senior management team accurately perceive their school as a good one with some very distinctive and strong features. Pupils attain above average standards and make good progress. Pupils of all ages, ethnic group and gender feel safe and enjoy school. Most parents are happy with the school's successful approach to the personal and academic development of their children. Good teaching and an improving curriculum are key factors that have helped the school to maintain a rising trend in standards over recent years. The school is well led and efficiently managed and provides good value for money. The overall assessment procedures and analyses are areas for further development. These are being addressed in the school development plan by the creation of a single school database. The work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is being reviewed to extend the range of choice offered to pupils. The school is well placed to improve its performance further. Managers have a good understanding of what needs to be done to move the school forward. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in implementing a very good citizenship programme. Information and communication technology is now firmly embedded in the school's teaching and learning.

What the school should do to improve further

Implement the planned improvements to track the pupils' progress and promote their learning. Develop the work related curriculum further in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils have a wider range of choice to meet their needs and future aspirations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in national tests at 14 years of age, and in GCSE are above the national average for most pupils. The school's science specialist college status has already contributed positively to improving results in the single science courses at GCSE. The school recognises that there are sometimes significant differences in the performance of an individual pupil between one subject and another. It has relevant strategies to help improve matters. There is little difference between the standards and achievement of minority ethnic groups in the school. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities progress particularly well because of the effective support they receive. The school has identified underachievement by some boys, but overall they are performing at a level higher than expected. Standards have risen over the last five years at GCSE and in Years 7 to 9, and the school's results in 2005 are similar to those in 2004. Attainment on entry to the school is average and the attainment of pupils represents good progress across the school. Pupils' literacy and mathematical knowledge and understanding are well developed. At GCSE the progress remains good as a result of good teaching. The school set and generally meet challenging academic targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development of pupils is good. Pupils question their own beliefs and are very respectful to others. For example, in two assemblies celebrating harvest, they reflected on the 'miracle of earth' and 'God of the harvest' to sustain life. When asked to pray for the plight of less fortunate people they did so with great respect. They abide by the school's code of conduct and display a very good understanding of moral issues. The school's emphasis on positive attitudes and behaviour means that pupils develop a very strong sense of responsibility as well as social and environmental awareness. They contribute well to local charities and conservation work, such as clearing paths on the North Downs. Pupils gain understanding of different cultures and religions in religious education lessons and in a number of other subjects including the humanities and English. Pupils enjoy attending school. This is demonstrated by high levels of attendance and very positive attitudes and behaviour that they show in lessons and around school. Discussion with pupils and responses from parents in their questionnaires confirm this view. Pupils feel very safe in school and the atmosphere is very calm in lessons and when pupils move around school. Pupils were very much involved in the identification of areas where they felt unprotected from low level bullying. As a result a further survey specific to this problem was devised. Incidents are now very infrequent and are dealt with effectively by the school. The school encourages pupils to lead healthy lifestyles and deals effectively with issues regarding smoking, substance abuse and exercise.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and as a result pupils make good progress. Some faculties and subjects such as Human Relationships and Natural Sciences share good classroom practice which further enhances learning. Many teachers plan very good introductions to lessons which motivate pupils and set the scene for new learning. For example, in a Year 10 History of Medicine lesson pupils contributed with interest to a discussion on how and why Vesalius challenged the work of Galen because of the skilful use of illustrations by the teacher. Good question and answer sessions at regular intervals in the lesson enable pupils to understand what it is they are to learn and the teacher to assess pupils' progress. Lessons have a good pace, moving swiftly and holding pupils' interest. At times, teaching is only satisfactory because pupils, although keen to learn, do not make as much progress as they might because there is limited opportunity for them to learn for themselves. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils, respecting their contributions in lessons and listening to them carefully. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour make a significant contribution to a very good learning ethos in the school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements, are well taught and make good progress. Faculties keep their own detailed records on individual pupils and monitor their progress

regularly. Their record-keeping and assessment systems vary, however, and the school recognises that there is a need to create a central database so that all subject teachers are consistent in targets set for individual pupils. Pupils' work generally is marked on a regular basis. In some work teachers write explicit comments as to what pupils should do to improve. However, this is not consistently so for all teachers. Homework is set and recorded regularly and makes an important contribution to pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides a satisfactory balance of academic and practical work, together with a developing programme of life skills. There is still work to do in making the curriculum more relevant to all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum shows a significant improvement in the application of numeracy, literacy and information and communication technology across subjects since the last inspection. The programme for citizenship has been thoughtfully developed and provides pupils with a good understanding of health and safety issues and their own well-being. Able and interested pupils profit well from studying a second language in the extra lessons provided before the official start of the school day. Extra-curricular provision is very good and pupils enjoy a wide range of activities, including some that are residential. These widen the pupils' experiences very effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are well cared for. The faculty structure provides pupils with a pastoral system which supports their personal development very well. Relationships are very strong and pupils feel as though they have someone that they can confide in when they have problems. Vulnerable pupils, such as those with low attendance and personal problems, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities receive outstanding support that enables them to achieve well. Each of the five faculties has a special needs coordinator who has very good knowledge of pupils' individual needs and monitors their progress effectively. Links with outside agencies are effective in providing further support. Systems to monitor pupils' personal development are good but those to monitor their academic progress are less effective. The school identifies the need to improve target setting as a priority. Pupils interviewed during the inspection knew how well they were doing and how to improve. They receive good advice on future courses and careers. The school has good systems for child protection to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. There are clear procedures in place to maximise safety but the school recognises that more rigorous monitoring is necessary to ensure procedures are followed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The very successful leadership of the headteacher over a number of years is recognised by all, including parents. The school is deservedly popular with a long waiting list for

places. The school's self-evaluation judges leadership and management to be good, a judgement with which inspectors agree. While stating the strengths in leadership it recognises that, due to problems with staff recruitment, improvement is still in process in some areas of middle management. The headteacher leads a strong, stable senior management team, utilising individual strengths effectively. This includes the Faculty Heads, who are responsible for the efficient day to day running of the school. The Science Specialist College Status has enabled the school to make a significant contribution to science and mathematics teaching in local primary and secondary schools and establish closer links with the local community. A number of governors, though not all, have a close relationship with the school, are well-informed and assigned to a particular faculty. Good management ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from a high level of support. The Faculty Heads successfully manage and support the academic and pastoral needs of their pupils. The school's organisation of clubs and other activities are designed to encourage large numbers of pupils to take a full part in the life of the school. The monitoring of lessons by the Faculty Heads and senior managers has provided an accurate assessment of the quality of teaching well matched to the findings of the inspection team. Managers are developing a central system for monitoring data and tracking pupil progress. The school is well resourced and provides good value for money. The potential for school improvement is good. The school has made significant improvement since the last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to give you our main findings following our visit to inspect the school. During our visit we talked with a great many of you as well as with governors, teachers, support staff and parents. We also looked at samples of your schoolwork both in the classroom and around the school. Given the positive views that so many of you expressed to us during the inspection you will not be surprised to learn that, overall, we judge that Riddlesdown High is a good school with many strengths.

We agree with you that a major strength of the school is the success of staff in creating and maintaining a safe, learning environment for you to work in. Your representatives on Year Group Committees and the School Council contribute well to debates on issues affecting you. Bullying and other forms of harassment are dealt with swiftly and effectively. We were impressed with your level of involvement, reflecting a healthy lifestyle, in a wide range of sports, clubs and arts activities outside lessons. Your commitment to the wider community is shown, for example, by those working on the conservation of the nearby downlands.

Overall, your standards are above the national average and we judge that you make better progress than expected through the school. This is because teaching is good and your attitudes to learning are good. However, the school recognises that there is some variation in standards between subjects and is reviewing its assessment procedures so that the targets set for you individually are pitched at the right level. A further priority for the school is to look at the courses available to you in Years 10 and 11 so that you have a wider range of choice to meet your needs and future aspirations.