



Redborne Upper School and Community College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 109643
LEA BEDFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 278228
Inspection dates 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005
Reporting inspector Mrs. Melanie Kavanagh LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Flitwick Road
School category	Voluntary aided		MK45 2NU
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01525404462
Number on roll	1361	Fax number	01525841246
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Prof. Joe Morris
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Nigel Croft

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	Inspection number 278228
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Redborne Upper School and Community College is a voluntary aided comprehensive school. The school was awarded specialist status in sports and training school status in September 2003. The school is oversubscribed and is bigger than the average secondary school. Over 96% of the students are from white British backgrounds with a broad range of other ethnic backgrounds represented in the remaining 4%. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs is lower than the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special educational needs is lower than the national average. The school is located in an attractive and spacious site and includes a school farm.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school is providing good education overall. The school provides a safe and caring environment within which students and staff feel valued. Students' behaviour, attendance and punctuality are excellent. The school provides good care and guidance and many students participate enthusiastically in extra curricular activities including voluntary and charitable work. The sixth form is a strength of the school and its students provide good role models for younger pupils. The school works well in collaboration with other schools, colleges and agencies through its specialist status. Achievements and standards are good and students make good progress in lessons. Inspectors agreed with the school's judgement that performance in English at Key Stage 4 should be further improved. The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers provide well planned and effective lessons where most students make good progress. Lessons are relevant and interesting and teachers stretch the most able students and support the less able students effectively. Working relationships between teachers and students are good and the atmosphere in lessons is pleasant and courteous. Overall, there is a need to increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning. In addition, feedback to students is insufficiently clear to enable them to know precisely how to improve their work. The curriculum provided in the main school is good and in the sixth form it is outstanding. Students benefit from a very broad range of subjects and vocational provision including specialist courses provided through the school's farm. The school has made significant improvements in most of the main issues identified at the last inspection. Accommodation remains poor in some areas, despite improvements, and there is a need to improve access for students with restricted mobility. Overall, the school's self evaluation is accurate and self critical. Staff are involved actively in judging quality and identifying areas for improvement. Lesson observation is particularly effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Staff morale is high and managers are accountable for their areas of responsibility. Decisive and effective action is taken where weaknesses are identified. The school has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Most students complete their courses and achieve very well. They obtain results that are good overall, and particularly good in some subjects. Students are able to build on their skills and pursue their interests. The outstanding range of AS and GCE A level subjects is supplemented by a range of vocational courses. Overall, teaching is good. Links with businesses enhance learning effectively. Students' personal development is outstanding. Students are confident and well motivated. They regard the sixth form highly and contribute very effectively to shaping aspects of provision and provide good role models within the school. The sixth form is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the recent improvements in students' progress in English at Key Stage 4 are maintained. - Provide informative feedback to students in order for them to know precisely how to improve their work. - Increase and develop the use of ICT to support learning. - Improve access to school buildings and facilities for students with restricted mobility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The overall achievement of pupils and students is good. Achievement is good at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. Students join the school in Year 9 and make good progress in English and science and outstanding progress in mathematics. The percentage of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A*-C has been above the national average since 2000. In 2004, students' progress at key stage 4 was satisfactory. The school has identified weaker performance in English in 2004 as a major factor in depressing progress at key stage 4. Decisive and effective action has been taken by the school to bring about improvements in English and progress is now good. The large number of students taking vocational courses in the main school and sixth form achieve very well. The school is aware of gender differences in attainment and has worked hard to improve boys' performance at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. In 2004, girls continued to perform better than boys at key stage 4. However, in the sixth form, male students achieved the same very high pass rates as female students at GCE A level and a higher percentage pass rate at AS level. Achievement in the sixth form is very good and students achieve high standards overall. Many students achieve above what could be expected from their qualifications on entry and make good or better progress. The school sets challenging targets and many are achieved. Students with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. Students with statements of special educational needs make exceptional progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of students is good and some aspects are outstanding. Students enjoy their education and are proud to attend the school. Attendance levels are high and students are punctual arriving at their lessons and activities. A high proportion of students participate in extra-curricular activities and many continue their studies into the school's sixth form. Students behave very well in lessons and around the school. There are effective procedures in place to deal with occasional instances of bullying. Attitudes to learning are good. Students listen carefully, make considered responses to questions, and work effectively in pairs and small groups. The general atmosphere in the school and in lessons is pleasant and purposeful. Students develop good self-awareness, a clear set of values, good social skills, and a satisfactory appreciation of cultural diversity. They participate in charitable events enthusiastically. Students make a significant contribution to the life of the school through the year

councils, the school council and the sports council. Students are represented on several governors' committees by the Head Boy and Head Girl. Students engage in a wide range of physical activities and are aware of the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. This is reflected in their request for healthier food in the school's restaurant. The self-confidence that the school nurtures successfully prepares students for their later careers. Teamwork is well developed and students speak with enthusiasm of the opportunities they are given to take part in work experience and the life of the school farm. Sixth formers have clear career aspirations and are well prepared for employment and higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and some is outstanding. In the many lessons which are at least good, teachers demonstrate expert knowledge of their subjects and plan imaginative and challenging learning activities. Very good planning is a feature of lessons and includes varied activities to stretch the most able and support the less able. The purpose of activities is very clearly communicated to students and their progress is frequently checked. Teachers make lessons relevant and interesting to pupils. Teaching methods and tasks are well matched to pupils' needs enabling them to make good progress. The schools' analysis of the quality of teaching closely matches that seen on the inspection. Students are well behaved, attentive and exceptionally well motivated. Their enjoyment of the good teaching they receive is evident and contributes to a very good learning culture. Working relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Overall, recent training has improved the quality of teaching. The increased accuracy of lesson observation judgments has been supported effectively by the outstanding 'e-coaching peer learning' programme initiated at the school. However, there is a need to increase the use of ICT to support learning. Most pupils are aware of their target levels and grades. However, there is insufficient systematic feedback to students in order for them to know clearly how to improve their performance.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form, and makes a significant contribution to students learning effectively. The curriculum is much improved since the last inspection, particularly in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). The opportunities offered to students by courses and activities through the school farm increase the flexibility of the curriculum effectively. Statutory requirements are met. Provision for literacy and numeracy is good. ICT is satisfactory but is not used systematically to develop students'

learning and assess their progress in all subjects. Progression routes are very well planned, enabling a substantial majority of students to benefit from the sixth form. Learners are well prepared for work and economic well-being. Education for safety and health through personal, social and health education is good. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding. The school provides a very wide range of AS and GCE A level courses and subjects. These courses are enhanced by relevant and varied vocational programmes. A substantial number of students study a mixture of academic and vocational courses. Courses are provided for students who do not have the entry requirements for GCE A levels or who prefer wholly vocational programmes. Links with employers are very good, particularly in vocational courses. The school's specialist status in sport has been effective in raising standards, promoting collaborative activities and improving provision. The standard of teaching and learning and the quality of lesson observations have been enhanced and improved through activities connected with the school's training school status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. All the requirements for child protection are in place and staff are alert to any symptoms of distress displayed by students. Students arriving in Year 9 and Year 12 are very well supported. Risks are carefully assessed and students of all ages feel safe in the school. Overall, staff are vigilant and there is a good level of supervision. However, the monitoring of attendance at individual lessons and at after-school activities is insufficiently rigorous. The good working relationships between students and staff underpin much of the school's work. Students know that they are valued. Good levels of support are offered by learning support assistants to those with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is very good liaison with external agencies and students have ready access to sources of help. The school provides effective in-house counselling, on-site medical advice from a trained nurse and a range of support groups to meet the needs of the most vulnerable students. Students are provided with good academic and careers' advice. Learning mentors provide effective support. Students have a strong voice in the school. For example, the students' council holds its own budget and is involved actively in making decisions about campus development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. There is a clear vision and mission for the school based on its role within the community, its specialist status in sport and its designation as a training school. Students achieve well. The headteacher provides good leadership focused successfully on raising standards and promoting the well being of students. The senior management team have clear roles matching their expertise and experience. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in broadening the curriculum and improving provision in ICT and design and technology. However, access for students with restricted mobility is poor in some areas of the

school and, despite improvements, accommodation remains poor in some buildings. In particular, students have insufficient social space. Overall, the school has very accurately identified the key priorities for improvement through its school improvement plan and self evaluation. However, it is less clear and accurate on some aspects of achievement and standards and overstates the strengths of teaching and achievement in the sixth form. Subject and departmental reviews are built on effectively to arrive at the whole school self evaluation. Staff are actively involved at every stage of self evaluation and have a sense of shared ownership of the final document. Performance monitoring is highly effective. Managers and teaching staff are accountable for achievements and progress in their areas. Decisive and vigorous action is taken to improve any area identified as under performing. Lesson observation is a particular strength. Observations are detailed and strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning are identified accurately. The school has encouraged effectively a culture where staff are confident enough to be self critical and to welcome suggestions for improvement. The recruitment of suitably qualified teachers in some subject areas has proved to be difficult and has had an impact on students' achievement. However, the school has taken very vigorous and imaginative action to encourage and attract new staff. There are good links with outside agencies, parents/carers and other stakeholders. The overwhelming majority of parent questionnaires, used as part of the inspection, provided strong support for the school. Governance is good with well informed governors who monitor standards effectively.

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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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

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

Earlier this week a small team of inspectors visited your school. We met and talked with many of you and sat in and watched your lessons. We also met with your teachers and had letters from your parents. This letter is to tell you about our findings and explain what we think the school does well and how it could be even better. The school offers you a good quality of education. One of its greatest strengths is you. Your behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. In our meetings, we were impressed by your thoughtfulness and self confidence. You expressed your views clearly and with maturity. We also thought that your contributions in lessons were very good and noticed how well you work together in teams. You are rightly proud of your school and the part you play in the school community. The school helps you to grow and develop into well rounded adults. Your examination results are good, especially in the sixth form. Your school is well managed and your teachers work hard to make your lessons well organised and interesting. You praised the way that your teachers care for you and offer extra help when you need it. We have asked the school to make sure that you all achieve everything you are capable of in your GCSE results and to make sure that you know exactly how to improve your work. We have also asked the school to help you use computers more in your work. We have commented that some of your rooms need improving and that those of you who use wheelchairs or find moving around difficult need better facilities. One of the most important ways the school can improve is by you continuing to show the interest and maturity that we noticed when we were in your school. You told us that there are very few instances of bullying. Remember that your teachers will always help you and tell them straight away if you, or a friend, need help. I wish you well for the future and hope that you are successful in whatever you want to do.