



The Royal Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110530
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278454
Inspection dates 10 May 2006 to 11 May 2006
Reporting inspector Cathie Munt

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Amersham Road
School category	Foundation		High Wycombe
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Bucks HP13 6QT
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01494 524955
Number on roll	1355	Fax number	01494 551419
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Higginson
Date of previous inspection	20 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Roy Page

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	10 May 2006 - 11 May 2006	278454

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The pupils' attainment on entry is well above average. The proportion entering the school with learning difficulties or disabilities is lower than in schools nationally and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is very small. Almost all students transfer into the sixth form. The school was granted specialist status in languages in 1996. In 2005 it received the local authority Award for Outstanding Community Involvement. The school provides boarding accommodation for approximately 70 students. The headteacher, who was previously the senior deputy, assumed his post in April, following a brief spell as acting headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'I feel that alongside the amazing educational achievements, my son has become a well-rounded confident person, who will have very happy memories of his time here.'

'The school fosters excellent values and, while disciplined, the children feel safe and happy in the friendly environment.'

'Senior pupils truly seem to welcome the younger ones and are helpful when they need some guidance.'

'Members of staff give an extraordinary amount of their time to give the boys a huge range of extra-curricular activities outside the normal school day.'

'My son entered the school as a very shy, average boy and has become a confident, successful Oxbridge candidate.'

These parents' views exemplify the range of reasons why the Royal Grammar School is judged by the inspectors to provide an outstanding quality of education. This coincides with the school's own view of its performance.

Team work is the hallmark of the school and the headteacher sets the tone by his example. Throughout the school, staff support and complement one another admirably. The strong sense of commitment to the pastoral and academic development of the boys is evident in the excellent teaching, outstanding standards, the exotic, and more conventional, school visits and the overwhelming sense of community that assails visitors from the moment that they enter the school.

The newly appointed headteacher is held in high regard being well respected in the school and the community. He ably performed the role of acting headteacher this year. The school knows itself well and is addressing areas for development with rigour and determination. The current focus on widening teaching styles and improving the use of assessment data is a clear example of the school's reflective approach. Other issues from the last inspection have been successfully addressed and the school rightly judges its progress in this aspect as good. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form is outstandingly effective. Many members of staff contribute to its very effective leadership and management. Students' achievement by the end of the sixth form is excellent and improving. The proportion of top grades is exceptionally high. This success is a testament to the students' unusually good motivation and well-developed learning skills. Students joining the sixth form from outside speak warmly of the school and rapidly become part of its excellent climate for learning. As one said, 'you can get on with your work here'. Students rightly attribute their enjoyment of lessons and their progress to the well focused and challenging teaching. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are very skilled in preparing students for examinations. They inspire interest in their

subjects and develop very good relationships with students. The wide range of academic subjects and the unusually comprehensive programme of enrichment activities meet the needs of students very well. Students are supported comprehensively and are very successful in applying for higher education. Their personal development is excellent because they have so many opportunities to support younger students, exercise leadership, express their views and make a contribution within the school community and in the wider world. Highly successful participation in the Young Enterprise scheme, much appreciated special events such as the leadership conference and European work experience prepare students very well to take their place in the world of work. The school has rightly identified that making better use of performance data in target setting and individual support, improving the currently inadequate private study facilities and focusing on students' independent learning skills is the way forward to making standards higher still.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The effectiveness of the welfare provision within the boarding school is outstanding. The building is purpose built, well maintained and kept immaculately clean and tidy. Dormitory accommodation is excellent. The common room offers a relaxed and informal atmosphere where boarders are given their own budget to supplement the amenities provided. All rooms have excellent study facilities and students benefit from outstanding support and guidance. Students all say they enjoy being in the boarding house where they feel safe and benefit from this guidance and the outstanding provision of extra-curricular activities organised by the committed staff. These activities encourage students to take regular exercise. The boarders' council successfully contributed to the campaign to improve the quality of their food. Boarders come from diverse backgrounds and include a number of international students none of whom are at the early stages of language acquisition. The important contribution that boarding makes to the students' personal development adds value to the school community.

The few recommendations from the 2004 Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) inspection have been addressed by the school. In addition, systems to further improve the safety and care of students have been implemented. This inspection confirms the findings of the report that the school fully meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What the school should do to improve further

Focus on:

- sharing widely the excellent practice in assessment for learning which exists in some parts of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Attainment at the Royal Grammar School is very high because the school constantly seeks to help students to do as well as they can. Standards in lessons reflect these results. The challenging targets set by the school are met consistently. Boys do very well in the national tests for 14 year olds with the majority attaining results considerably higher than the expected level for the age group in all subjects. Results at GCSE were outstanding in 2005: well over a half of the grades were A* or A and a considerable number of students achieved marks among the top five percent in the country. A Level results are consistently well above average. Almost all boys go on to higher education: the majority are accepted by their first choice universities.

All students, including higher attainers and those with learning difficulties, make exceptional academic progress because the school ethos encourages maximum effort and places a strong emphasis on developing well rounded, confident and questioning students who have a great desire to develop and use their skills and knowledge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

There are many strengths in the school's provision for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and well-being of the students. Its impact is outstanding. Boys have several ways of making their voice heard and have used these channels effectively to improve many aspects of their life at school, for example, they benefit from healthier food. They are pleased to adopt healthy life-styles; the majority join in keenly with sporting and social activities offered by the rich variety of clubs and societies. Inspectors agree with their opinion that the school has had a strong positive effect on their social development as well as on their academic success. Students learn to be questioning, responsible and caring citizens. The effectiveness of the opportunities for developing leadership skills were evident in the confident manner in which Year 8 students led an inspiring assembly, in the boys' mature and thoughtful conversations, and in the way they conducted themselves ably when participating in decision-making meetings. Pupils confirm the schools' view that effective procedures are in place to address any bullying that occurs. Attendance rates are high and lessons start and finish punctually. The school's specialist status contributes greatly to the students' career and life chances by ensuring that languages are seen as a tool they enjoy using and that they regard as a corner-stone of their future success. Practice in this area is exemplary.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Senior managers demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching in each department. However, heads of department are often too modest in their

evaluation of its impact on learning. Most lessons observed by the inspectors were good: a significant number were excellent. Teachers show tremendous enthusiasm for their subjects, have very high expectations and set challenging targets. Students show a high level of enjoyment and interest in lessons and behaviour is exemplary. In many of the lessons observed pupils made exceptional progress in their learning. The overall quality of education provided is outstanding.

In the most effective lessons, teaching was inspirational. The tasks were varied, student-centred and differentiated effectively to meet the needs of all the boys. Well-chosen questions helped students deepen their understanding and apply what they had learned to different situations. Teachers checked the extent to which every student had met the learning objectives. In these lessons the pace was crisp and the students were engrossed in the subject. Often where learning was most effective, students worked collaboratively and teachers circulated to offer well-judged advice. In a few instances students would have benefited from increased opportunities to work independently and to evaluate their own learning. Most students have an understanding of how well they are doing, but the use of assessment information to inform the next learning steps and to set targets is not yet consistent. There is, however, some excellent practice in the school that could be shared so that learning is maximised in all areas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum the school provides is outstanding. It meets the needs, aspirations and capabilities of all the students most effectively. Students have a wealth of opportunities to succeed with a stimulating and challenging curriculum and extra-curricular programme. For instance, opportunities exist for the students to gain qualifications in some of the extra-curricular activities such as photography and sailing. Many of the activities have been instituted as a direct response to students' requests. The huge enjoyment of these activities shows that they are very much appreciated by the student body. The range of sporting provision enables and encourages students to be healthy and to develop team skills. A wide variety of visits provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their cultural awareness as well as extending their understanding of the curriculum. The Language College status has had a clear influence on the high quality of language provision. The school is proactive in regularly reviewing the curriculum to meet particular and local needs. Recent developments in information technology are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. There is no doubt that the school provides the students with a curriculum that is designed to equip them for their future in the widest sense.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to students are outstanding and have a significant impact on their development and well being. Students and parents have a real sense that the school cares for its students and wants them to achieve the best they can.

There is a wide range of pastoral support for students, including Form Tutors, Heads of Year, Matron, Chaplaincy and prefects. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language have excellent support resulting in their good progress by the end of Year 11. The care, guidance and support for those students who are boarders are judged to be particularly outstanding, with these students achieving even higher standards than those who do not board.

Procedures for child protection and health are implemented extremely effectively. The school provides excellent academic support through its arrangements for setting challenging targets. The tracking and assessment system is robust and is being further refined to provide easier access to individual student data and easier dissemination of the information to all teachers. Students in Year 7 and the sixth form have an effective induction which helps them to settle quickly. Excellent guidance is provided to help students choose examination subjects that match their interests and aptitudes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The inspection team found the quality of leadership motivates and influences students admirably. High quality teamwork has had a major impact on the strong ethos for learning. The robust and effective collaboration of senior managers working in partnership with the governors has provided clear direction for school improvement. Leaders at all levels are very good role models for other staff and students; their commitment to inclusion, promotion of equality and concern for the needs of the individual are excellent.

Governors are actively involved in supporting this successful and dynamic school. They provide very good strategic guidance and effectively hold senior leaders to account. Governors are committed to providing a caring, safe community that promotes high achievement. Financial planning is closely linked to the school's educational priorities and resources are effectively deployed for the benefit of students. Partnership with parents and outside agencies has very effectively supported the work of the school. The exceptionally high expectation of staff and students has had a positive influence on the standards achieved. The current stability of the school owes much to the quality of the headteacher's leadership and to the determination and commitment of the school community. Recent staffing changes have enabled the school to restructure responsibilities so there is a whole school focus on effective teaching and learning.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	1	1
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	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

Students

Thank you for the warm welcome you extended to us when we visited your school to carry out our inspection. We were most impressed by your outstanding behaviour your attitudes and your values. Your academic standards are exceptionally high and you make very good progress during your time at The Royal Grammar School.

Your pride in your school is justified. The headteacher together with his senior team and the governing body lead the school exceptionally well. They ensure that the aims and values of the school underpin all that happens within it and that you are getting an excellent all round education. We have asked them to share more widely the excellent practice in assessment for learning which exists in some parts of the school to make your school even better. You rise to the challenge to achieve your best in school subjects and the many activities outside lessons enable you to develop outstanding personal qualities. We feel that the range of opportunities that are offered to you by your school is outstanding. Your school certainly makes a positive contribution to your health and well being. Boarders confer an additional and effective strand to the school community and a great many day pupils contribute both to the school and to the wider community in important ways.

The school seeks your views well and responds appropriately. Various councils provide you with a clear voice and effect change on your behalf. You are taught extremely well. Your lessons are interesting and well suited to your learning needs. Many of you, and many of your parents, expressed gratitude to your teachers' high commitment to preparing you well for studies beyond school and for future employment.

With best wishes

Catherine Munt

Her Majesty's Inspector.