



Sir William Romney's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115779
LEA Gloucestershire
Inspection number 279680
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lowfield Road
School category	Foundation		Tetbury
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Gloucestershire GL8 8AE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01666 502378
Number on roll	701	Fax number	01666 505864
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Eric Dawson

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and an additional inspector.

Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average comprehensive in Tetbury, which has 49 students in the sixth form. There are roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Students are mostly White British and there are very few from other backgrounds or whose first language is not English. The percentage of students identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities, including statements, is broadly in line with the national average. There is a small number of students with physical disabilities and a small number from traveller backgrounds.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's leadership team judges that the school is satisfactory overall. Inspectors agree and recognise that there are many good features. The school succeeded in addressing the main issues from the last inspection but it has undergone many changes since then including falling numbers, especially in the sixth form. Despite underachievement in mathematics in Key Stage 3, the school has raised overall attainment at GCSE and is now more focused on improving the quality of teaching and middle management. The school has been awarded specialist status for Performing and Visual Arts which it plans to use to drive further improvement. The new senior team has developed a number of detailed strategies that focus tightly on raising standards and achievement. However, it has not yet had enough time to implement these consistently across the school. As a result, whilst improving, the standards students achieve, the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the sixth form are currently satisfactory.

Parents and students speak positively about the school but identify low level disruption in some lessons as a barrier to improving standards. The school has begun to address this and generally cares for its students effectively and enables them to develop their personal qualities well. The school is good at listening and responding to the views of students on a range of issues. The headteacher has provided strong leadership and direction in difficult circumstances, and is ably supported by the governing body. There is capacity for the school to improve, and it gives satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that overall the sixth form is satisfactory. Students with a wide range of abilities are admitted into the sixth form but numbers overall are very small and falling, resulting in small class sizes and a reduced number of courses over recent years. The school is hoping to secure the sixth form's viability by offering more vocational courses. However, standards and progress are satisfactory overall. Students receive good guidance and support in the sixth form and teachers know students well. Students have targets set frequently and progress towards them is reviewed systematically. The monitoring of students' attendance is poor.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of leadership at middle management level in order to raise standards, particularly in mathematics
- increase the proportion of good or better teaching across the school
- continue to address persistent low level disruption in some lessons
- ensure the sixth form is viable and is able to provide an appropriate curriculum for all learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that achievement and standards are satisfactory. When students start school in Year 7 their standards are just below average. They make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and the most recent results show that the school exceeded its targets for Level 5+ in English and science with lower attaining boys achieving better than in 2004. Students have underachieved in mathematics and did so in 2005 but with more students gaining Level 6+. Results for GCSE in 2005 are better than those for 2004, with both being above the national average and local education authority (LEA) targets in terms of the percentage of students gaining five A*–C grades. However, boys did less well than in 2004 and the gap between girls and boys has widened. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress and more students achieved five A*–G grades than in 2004.

In the sixth form, standards are also average and progress is satisfactory. There was a significant improvement in 2005 in the pass rates for AS levels although there remain inconsistencies for different subjects at both AS and A level. Achievement on the Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) course is consistently good, although numbers are small.

Grade 3

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most students enjoy coming to school, feel safe and demonstrate a good awareness of right and wrong. There are good opportunities for students to reflect on ethical and social issues in assemblies and through well structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) and religious education programmes. The 'President of the day' activity engages all students actively in understanding issues related to the third world. The school is affiliated to the diocese of Gloucester and through this students are developing an awareness of the importance of spirituality in their lives.

Students generally behave well and responsibly but in some lessons a small minority persists in disrupting learning for others. Students are encouraged to contribute to their school community in a variety of ways, such as assuming reception duties and being 'bully buddies'. Attendance is above average in the main school. Students understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and participate enthusiastically in a range of physical activities, such as the performing arts and sporting activities. Students have a voice and their ideas are listened to, for example the introduction of a waste paper recycling scheme and new benches for socialising.

Grade 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most lessons seen were satisfactory, with some good but none outstanding. Some inadequate lessons were seen where teachers failed to engage students effectively, and this often generated low level disruption. Teaching is better in the main school than in the sixth form. Good lessons were seen in the main school in science, and in the sixth form in geography. Inadequate lessons were seen in mathematics, where there have been problems in recruitment of teachers. Another constraint on teaching and learning, arising from the school's size, is that a proportion of teachers have to teach two or more subjects.

The school has developed appropriate systems to track students' progress, and some teachers use the information to plan lessons, but this is not consistent across the school. The teaching supports sound progress. Most students enjoy their work and have a good idea of how well they are doing via termly grades.

A system of observing teaching has been implemented and there are plans to disseminate good practice. Use is also made of local Key Stage 3 consultants in planning booster lessons in Year 9. Close liaison with local primary schools is used to identify students with learning difficulties and make reasonable provision for them.

Grade 3

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Students' needs are adequately met by the curriculum. In all years, students receive personal, social and health education and citizenship. In Key Stage 4, students can study a satisfactory range of academic and applied GCSEs and a GNVQ in information and communication technology (ICT). The school plans to extend its small work-related learning provision by collaboration with local schools.

Students in the sixth form can choose from a small range of GCE AS and A levels and a VCE in leisure studies. At level two, the school plans to extend the limited range of vocational provision but students can study general national vocational qualifications in leisure and tourism and in health and social care. The school offers a satisfactory range of enrichment and after school activities. The school has been awarded the Sports Mark award and some sixth form students help local sports clubs in their coaching of younger players.

Grade 3

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

In Key Stages 3 and 4, the school has good systems in place for monitoring students' attendance and punctuality as well as their academic and personal development. Staff know the students well and every effort is made to seek their views and address their needs. Academic review days inform students of their progress and help them set challenging targets for improvement. Students speak very warmly of the support they receive at the school's Phoenix Centre. This good on-site provision enables students to develop confidence and feel secure enough to discuss their anxieties and problems with trained staff. Students new to school settle in quickly as a result of sensible induction procedures. Arrangements for dealing with incidents of bullying are clear and students feel safe in the school's generally calm atmosphere. Careers education and guidance is detailed and thorough. Its effectiveness has recently attracted the Investors Careers Award. Child Protection procedures are in place. The routines observed during an emergency evacuation were conducted in an orderly manner and clearly understood by the whole school community.

Grade 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judged the effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management as good. Inspectors agreed that the new senior team has set about achieving its task of raising standards and improving the quality of teaching energetically. However, there has been limited time for these strategies to make the required improvements across the school. As a consequence, inspectors judged this element overall as satisfactory.

The long-serving headteacher has played a pivotal role in steering the school through difficulties caused by falling rolls. Staffing has been restructured to address budgetary issues so that the school is now on course to avoid a deficit. The governing body has been very effective in holding the school to account whilst supporting it well through difficult times. The headteacher works well with the new senior team. Together they have the capacity to make further improvements.

School development planning includes appropriate priorities and is supported by self-evaluation undertaken by each faculty area. An increased focus on teaching and learning has led to some formal monitoring of lessons in the main school, and there is less rigorous developmental monitoring in the sixth form. This is not undertaken with consistent rigour by all faculties. There are long-standing problems in mathematics, where there is no substantive head of department, nor an appropriate scheme of work. Parental and student questionnaires are analysed carefully to evaluate the effects of policies and to inform planning.

Grade 3

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

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	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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	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

Friday, 23rd September 2005

Dear Students

Following our visit to your school, we would like to thank you for your contributions to the inspection and tell you of our findings.

We judged that your school is satisfactory overall with areas that are good. The following points are what we found to be the key strengths and weaknesses:

your headteacher gives a strong direction to the school and, with the help of his governors, has made some important changes to enable you to continue to improve your achievements and standards of work

the school's award of specialist school status in the Performing and Visual Arts is already helping to bring about changes that will benefit you

your achievements are improving

your personal qualities develop well and you behave very sensibly and calmly

you are given good guidance and support by teachers at the school and you value highly the Phoenix Centre when you need to discuss your problems or concerns.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

with the help of your senior teachers, some subjects are to be better managed and led

teachers should aim to teach better lessons

the poor behaviour of some students in lessons is to be tackled

your sixth form should get bigger and provide more courses that you can think of studying.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm HMI Lead inspector