



Roundwood Park School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117520
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280107
Inspection dates 9 May 2006 to 10 May 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Michael Smith LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Roundwood Park
School category	Community		AL5 3AE
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01582 765344
Number on roll	1158	Fax number	01582 461404
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr. Colin Metcalfe
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr. Nick Daymond

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	9 May 2006 - 10 May 2006	280107

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Roundwood Park is a large, oversubscribed, specialist mathematics and computing school serving the town of Harpenden. It has a large sixth form. The vast majority of students are from a White British background and from socially advantaged areas. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average as is the number with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that Roundwood Park is a good school with many outstanding features. The school works well to ensure it meets its aim for students to take responsibility for their own learning within a calm, purposeful and enthusiastic atmosphere. It has developed a curriculum that motivates and inspires students to achieve standards which are well above national expectations and allows them to follow a very large range of out of school classes, clubs and sports. Teaching is usually good or better, with many excellent features. Students' personal development and welfare are good. They enjoy school and respond well to high expectations and good lessons, which motivate and engage them, hence their attendance is excellent. Behaviour is good and has improved significantly. It is rightly identified as an ongoing focus for the school because from time to time the poor behaviour of a minority of students detracts from the good behaviour of the vast majority. Students are not only taught about healthy living but they also follow this up by many of them choosing healthy options at lunch time. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. It has worked hard and effectively to respond to issues from the previous inspection. Effective systems to support the tracking of students' achievements are now in place. These also effectively map the skills of students and identify those in need of further support. The school is very well led by the headteacher who is effectively supported by his leadership team. They support curriculum areas well but subject leaders do not always take sufficient responsibility to monitor and evaluate the provision for which they are responsible and to improve standards. Pastoral leadership is very good and an integral part of the school's efforts to develop mature and responsible students. Governors support and challenge the school very well and hold the headteacher to account for the quality of education. The school is making very effective use of its specialist school status to enhance the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to develop teaching and learning and to support other schools. However, mathematics has not yet had a significant impact upon raising standards across the curriculum and this is an appropriately identified issue for the school within its improvement plan. The school gives good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The inspection supports the school's own view that the sixth form is good. Students enjoy being in the sixth form very much and praise the quality of education. Standards are high and reflect the high expectations teachers have of students and their response to good and engaging teaching. This also means that students attend well and take pride in their school. Students receive excellent care, support and guidance, especially as they progress from school to higher education or the world of work. The very good relationships between students and teachers reflect the quality of care they receive. The pastoral system is very effective in helping students overcome any difficulties. The school provides excellent opportunities for students to take responsibility, for example, as prefects, and maximise personal development. The sixth form is well led

and managed. Academic progress against predicted grades is carefully monitored and good ICT and other resources are maintained to support independent learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards within subject areas by enhancing the role of middle managers to lead developments within their departments.
- Eliminate the small number of incidents of poor behaviour by ensuring that the well planned system to improve behaviour is embedded across all lessons.
- Extend the work to support specialist school status by systematically planning opportunities to develop mathematics in subjects across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with standards above national average; they make good progress in Key Stage 3 and gain results that are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in music and modern foreign languages are lower than other subjects and a focus for improvement by the school in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, students respond well to good teaching and an engaging curriculum to make good progress and to gain very high results. At GCSE 80% of students gain five or more higher level passes, including mathematics and English in almost all cases. Students gain twice as many A* and A grades as the national average and this is a result of the high expectations that staff have of students in their classes. Results in the half-course GCSE religious education (RE) and ICT are good. Results are also good in English, combined science, history and in the full course RE where all students gained either an A* or A grade. All students gained at least one GCSE pass. Students with learning difficulties make good progress. In 2005, standards achieved by students at A level were well above average and results in vocational courses were high. Results in A level further mathematics, performing arts, RE, business studies and general studies were very good. The school is not complacent and has identified a concern with results at A/S level. Although high relative to national results, both standards and achievement are not as high as those for GCSE and A level. The school ensures all students follow appropriate courses by careful counselling and extending the vocational courses available. The school sets challenging targets, including those for its specialist school status, ensuring subjects have ownership of these and students are aware of what is expected of them. Last year the school met most of its targets and was close to those it did not. Governors work closely with the school to agree and monitor the progress towards the targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development and well-being are good. It is evident from students' excellent attendance and good academic achievement that they enjoy their education. The

school's new rewards and consequences system has improved behaviour in lessons. However, the behaviour for a small minority remains unsatisfactory. The school provides a controlled and safe environment in which students develop and progress well. Students have good respect for others and value their relationships with the staff highly. They, and the vast majority of parents, hold the school in high regard. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The comprehensive provision is well planned and coordinated but not enough is done to evaluate its effectiveness. Students, especially those in the sixth form, make positive contributions to the community through involvement with charities, the town youth council and working with elderly people. Learning about other faiths and traditions is satisfactory. Students in the sixth form provide good leadership in the school and run many activities extremely well. They lead the school council, which is effective in gaining views and ideas from students, and take their responsibilities very seriously when helping to appoint staff. Students are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. A significant number either walk or cycle to school. Students undertake physical education (PE) lessons in all years and the majority participate in sports activities. Healthy food is provided at lunchtime but choice and availability are sometimes limited. Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being, through attendance at the workplace for a day with a relative, work experience for one week and by subjects incorporating elements within their schemes of work, for example, in geography considering the financial issues of running a hill farm. These activities are well supported by local employers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good both in the main school and the sixth form and this contributes to the high standards of the students. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and share good relationships with the students. The good elements of teaching in lessons include, establishing a positive learning environment, good planning and the use of clear learning objectives. Students are able to effectively monitor their own progress when these are linked to national curriculum and examination course levels, and referred to during the lesson. The most successful lessons have a variety of interesting activities to maintain the pace of the work. These are well matched to the needs of the students, giving a balance of directed work and opportunities for independent learning and research. The school's specialist status has enabled the provision of interactive white boards that are well used to enhance learning. Students say that this adds to their enjoyment in lessons. The marking of work is inconsistent. In the majority of cases it is good and comments indicate the level of the work as well as ways in which the work can be improved further. In a few cases, work is left unmarked and constructive comments are rare. Assessment for learning has been recently introduced and is effective in some lessons. However, it is not yet fully embedded and being used on a day-to-day basis in all areas.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The quality of curriculum throughout the school is good. It has greater flexibility and relevance than at the time of the last inspection, especially with respect to option subject choices and work related learning. RE now meets statutory requirements. An extensive and expanding range of courses serves students well, particularly the most able. Accelerated courses are offered in modern foreign languages and mathematics and examination results are good. Students in the sixth form have a good range of advanced level courses from which to choose. The school has identified the need to extend these options and is working well with partners to develop more vocational courses and to extend the courses available to students in both Key Stage 4 and Post-16 provision. There are good links with other institutions, employers and training providers, increasing students' economic understanding. The recent appointment of an Enterprise coordinator with business experience has sharpened attitudes to work related learning. Students know, for example, that late applications for work experience placements are not acceptable in the business world. The many extra activities the school provides, including sports clubs, visits, performing arts, Young Enterprise and Duke of Edinburgh awards, have a positive impact upon the way students feel about the school and the way they mature. The opportunities in the sixth form for taking responsibilities are outstanding. The school's specialist status is used well to the benefit of learners in the school and in the wider community, including support for students prior to arriving at the school. Well organised summer schools help improve literacy and numeracy skills, and extend the expertise of higher attaining students. However, insufficient emphasis is given to mathematics in subjects across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support provided are outstanding. The school makes individuals feel valued and learning enjoyable. Staff have a genuine desire to help students achieve their full potential. The support provided by pastoral tutors and the school's counsellor is outstanding and highly valued. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties are given appropriate additional support. Assessment of students' work and tracking of their academic progress have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now good and a focus for further improvement. Systems in Key Stage 4 are very good but assessment practices in Key Stage 3 are not unified across the school and centrally coordinated. Students are given challenging targets and know how to improve. The assessment of students' pastoral progress is outstanding. The quality and accessibility of advice and guidance on choice of subjects, careers and opportunities in higher education are excellent. Students are interviewed at important stages of their education and provided with excellent guidance. Students are given good guidance on university courses and how to apply. Careers guidance is effective. The school has a well resourced careers library. Information evenings are much valued by parents and students. The school provides a safe environment in which students learn. A local child protection agreement is fully implemented in the school. Links with

outside child support agencies are excellent. Health and safety regulations are taken seriously and, as a result, accidents are rare. Regular safety audits are undertaken.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school is very well led by an effective headteacher who is ably supported by a dynamic senior leadership team and a very successful pastoral team. However, middle managers do not consistently monitor and evaluate their curriculum areas to identify issues for improvement and then work with their teams to ensure the quality of the provision gets better and standards are raised. The leadership team has an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has formulated a comprehensive plan on how to improve including clear measurable success criteria. The governing body is very involved in the school management and holds it to account extremely well, providing excellent support and challenge to the headteacher. The school has a very effective system for reviewing the curriculum. This includes governors gaining the views of students, which has ensured improvements to both the Post-16 provision and the Key Stage 4 curriculum. The school has very effectively gained the views of students and parents in its self-evaluation which has informed areas for improvement. Examples of these are changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum and the rewards and consequences system. However, some parents and students feel their views have not always been given sufficient consideration. In the sixth form, overall leadership is very good and routine arrangements are very well managed. Excellent use is made of monitoring information to raise achievement.

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	1	1
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	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	2	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	2
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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	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	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

Thank you for your very positive responses and welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting with you and your teachers. Your comments helped us to get a clear understanding of school life, what you enjoy and value in school. We thought that your school is a good school with many outstanding features, of which you can rightly be proud. It works well to ensure it meets its aim for students to take responsibility for their own learning within a calm, purposeful and enthusiastic atmosphere. Your positive comments show how much you like school and appreciate the work of the staff and shows why attendance is very high. You work well with your teachers to make sure that the school is a stimulating and interesting place. We were pleased to see how you could influence what happens in school and how you take health issues very seriously, for example, how many of you chose the healthy option at lunchtimes although we recognise that this may not be possible if you are last in the rota. You enjoyed some very interesting lessons and activities with some good teaching and a varied curriculum, including a very large variety of extra-curricular clubs and sports which many of you enjoy. Your school is very well led and knows its strengths and also the areas it wants to improve. As in nearly all schools, there are areas that could be better. The school needs to develop the use of mathematics in other subjects and to work with the middle managers to improve further the teaching and work you cover. A few of you let yourselves down by behaving in a poor manner and you need to take more responsibility for your actions by making sure you do not distract others by this inappropriate behaviour. We wish you well for the future and hope you enjoy your time and are successful at this very caring and supportive school.