



# Rydens School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 125262  
**LEA** Surrey LEA  
**Inspection number** 281927  
**Inspection dates** 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Ramesh Kapadia HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Hersham Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Walton-on-Thames
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Surrey KT12 5PY
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01932242994
<b>Number on roll</b>	1278	<b>Fax number</b>	01932252896
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs M Hicks
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Jackman

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281927
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of five inspectors, including four additional inspectors and led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

## Description of the school

Rydens is a large comprehensive school serving Walton-on-Thames. It has almost 1300 students aged 11 to 18, with about 160 students in the sixth form. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is around the national average, but the percentage of students with special educational needs is below the national average. The students are mainly white: a small percentage is from ethnic minorities and speak English as an additional language. The school has acquired specialist status in business and enterprise. It has had difficulties in recent years in recruiting and retaining staff in some subjects, partly due to the cost of living in the area.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judge that this is an improving school, with the capacity to improve further. All aspects, including overall effectiveness are at least satisfactory, and some are good. The sixth form is good in all aspects. The school overall gives satisfactory value for money. Achievement is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. There is some variation between subjects: English and mathematics are stronger than science, where students' experimental skills are weak. Teaching, students' personal development and care are all satisfactory in the main school. Teaching is good in the sixth form and better than in the main school. Personal development is good with regards to aspects such as economic understanding, but learning is sometimes not as good as it might be because of the behaviour of a minority of students. The curriculum is good with strengths in vocational education via strong links to a local college. The school is well led by a determined head, with his senior leadership team; the governors are supportive of the school, which has made improvements since its last inspection. The school has a good range of data and information available, which is used well by senior managers but less well by teachers in planning teaching and setting targets for students.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the sixth form's effectiveness and efficiency are good. Students' achievement, from a relatively low base at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) is good. Their attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average; their overall attainment in terms of graded passes at GCE (General Certificate of Education) A (advanced) level is close to the national average, though there are relatively few passes at the highest grades. Students do best in drama and English and least well in the sciences. Some subjects attract few students. Students are helped to become mature and sensible young people. There are good opportunities for personal development via a range of enrichment activities. Good care and support are provided.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

Ensure that teachers can analyse the data they are given to plan teaching which sets students realistic, challenging targets and thereby improve their achievement. Continue to take steps to raise standards in science, particularly in developing students' experimental skills. Establish a greater consistency of expectation of students' behaviour and attitude to learning in all classrooms.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Standards in the school are around national norms. Progress from Key Stage 2 (KS2) has been unsatisfactory in comparison to similar schools over the last three years but there are signs that it is now improving. The latest data for 2005 shows average progress during Key Stage 4 (KS4), which is a marked improvement from the previous two years. Students come to the school with attainment on entry which is around the national average but below the Surrey average. Their attainment in tests and GCSE examinations is near the national average. Key Stage 3 (KS3) test results improved in 2005 and the school is confident of better results in 2006. There has been an upward trend in GCSE results since 2000, with some variations from year to year. Value added in KS4 is now satisfactory but there has been underachievement in KS3 in the past so that progress from KS2 to KS4 was still well below average in 2005. There are variations in performance between subjects, with English and mathematics results being better than in science. Boys also made less progress than girls. The school is aware of the differences in achievement and the areas of weakness; it is taking appropriate action to improve students' progress. Targets are increasingly based on more accurate information; greater care needs to be taken to distinguish aspirational and realistic targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Though there are strengths, this differs from the school's self evaluation. Students enjoy school and have a clear understanding of moral issues and develop sound social skills. A minority of students disrupt the learning of others, which echoes the concerns about behaviour from a quarter of parents who responded to the questionnaire. The number of fixed term exclusions is high: the reasons for exclusions are now analysed more systematically and better systems are being introduced by the use of graded sanctions, contributing to a reduction. Students understand the importance of regular attendance and know that any unauthorised absence will be rigorously pursued. Although attendance and punctuality are improving, the school needs to continue its efforts to improve it still further. Spirituality, an issue at the last inspection, is now satisfactory. Students develop a satisfactory understanding of other religions and cultures. They are beginning to develop a stronger sense of responsibility for themselves and a sense of community through the house system. Students serve the school community through the newly established school council, which is chaired by a sixth former. They have negotiated a healthier lunchtime menu in the school canteen. The importance given to exercise is reflected in the wide range of sports clubs available. Members of the school council are being encouraged to become more actively involved in reviews of teaching and learning to promote more

responsibility. Students raise funds for charities and have established links with the local community by, for example, organising sporting activities in local primary schools. They are prepared well for the world of work: with the support of visitors from local industries, they identify and hone the skills that they will need to successfully apply for and gain employment. All sixth formers take the Surrey Graduation Certificate that requires students to contribute to the local community.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Inspectors agree with the judgement of the school that its teaching is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Lessons are well structured, following the common school format. Systematic monitoring by the headteacher has led to an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses across the school, with action being taken where necessary. Pockets of weakness remain in the main school, but in the sixth form all lessons observed were good or better. Outstanding teaching was observed in the sixth form where students enhanced their understanding of the dramatic importance of an opening sequence in a play using carefully selected texts. Good teaching was observed in various subjects including English, mathematics and business education. In the adequate lessons, though behaviour was generally well managed, this was not always the case. Two lessons were inadequate. On one occasion, this was partly due to students' limited experimental skills in science, in another this was due to unsatisfactory management of behaviour. In a few lessons, there was evidence of the use of self-assessment. Many teachers have data on students' prior attainment but it is not always used to good effect in planning lessons. The support provided by teaching assistants is satisfactory. A recent increase in the number of these additional adults has led to an improvement in provision for students with special educational needs.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

The school judged the curriculum to be satisfactory, but inspectors think that the curriculum is good throughout the school. This includes vocational courses for students in KS4 provided in conjunction with a local college. A reasonable range of A level subjects is offered in the sixth form, as well as vocational courses. The broad and balanced curriculum is firmly focused on preparing the students for adult life. Very good links have been established with three multi-national and other local companies. There is work experience for all students and extended work experience for some. In addition, Enterprise days, Young Enterprise activities and a Skills for Working Life course all contribute well to students' economic well-being. Students talk confidently about the future and obtaining employment. An issue from the previous inspection

report about the use of computers is being addressed by increasing use of interactive whiteboards to support learning. Students are encouraged to attend a wide variety of clubs and many sporting fixtures are arranged, both between houses and against other schools; these extra-curricular activities cater for a wide range of interests and abilities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the quality of its care, support and guidance is satisfactory across the main school and good in the sixth form, where there are well established systems of support and guidance. There are appropriate child protection procedures which are understood by staff. Students are polite and friendly, most work diligently in lessons and cooperate well. Relationships between students and their teachers are sound. The returns on the parental questionnaire expressed some concerns over bullying and behaviour; the school is working hard in these areas and has developed an appropriate anti-bullying policy, as confirmed in interviews with students who said that they feel safe. The school has good systems to provide support for students with special educational needs and some students are very appreciative of the help they receive. There are extra support lessons for literacy and mathematics, as well as study skills support. A house system has been just been established to strengthen links between the pastoral and academic support, but these changes have yet to be embedded into the life of the school. Overall targets are set for students but are not yet aligned to teacher assessment and developed into a manageable progression of steps in learning which would help students reach their goals. There is evidence of self-assessment in some subjects but this is not yet consistent across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with some strengths, as recognised by the school in its own self evaluation. Leadership in the sixth form is good. There is a strong sense of direction from headteacher and his senior leadership team. The priorities set out in the action plan are clearly focused on raising achievement and improving teaching and learning; policies are also being monitored and evaluated. Actions have been taken to deal with most issues raised in the previous inspection report. Revision classes and careful monitoring in Year 11 in 2005 enabled the GCSE results to rise in 2005. The school recognises that progress from KS2 is below average in comparison to similar schools, pointing to some inadequacies in teaching in previous years, which have been addressed. Its commitment to inclusion is demonstrated by the high percentage of students who attained 5 or more graded passes at GCSE in 2005. Teaching is now monitored on a systematic basis by the headteacher, and has resulted in some improvements in quality. Staffing difficulties in some subjects have

had an adverse effect, though these are being overcome so that almost all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. There is a wide range of data on performance which gives senior managers a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses. However, the data are not always used effectively enough by middle managers, leading to inconsistent performance between subjects and some under-achievement by students. The well-managed business and enterprise specialism has had an impact on the school ethos and also on teaching and learning in subjects such as English and geography. The school has improved the curriculum since the last inspection. Improvements have been also been made in the accommodation, including a new block for mathematics and technology. Accommodation and resources for learning are now adequate. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The governors are supportive of the school and have links to each of the faculties. They have provided valued support in relation to developing business and enterprise across the school. The governors do not meet all their statutory responsibilities: there is no act of collective worship, a point made in the previous inspection report.



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3	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	
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	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
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	2	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	2
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	3	
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	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 very much for welcoming us when we came to inspect your school on 16th and 17th November 2005. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing what you feel about the school.

The particular strengths of the school we have noted are: \* your test and examination results have improved in the last few years, especially in mathematics and English; \* the school's specialist status in business and enterprise has increased the range of opportunities for you to develop economic understanding; \* you are given a good range of subjects to study, especially in Years 10 and 11, where you have a good range of options to choose from, including opportunities to study at college as well as in the school; \* the new house system should help you feel part of a smaller community within the school as a whole and help you make better progress; \* those of you in the sixth form value the care and support, which help you progress well and become mature and sensible young people; \* there is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities available.

Of course, there are always things that could be better, and we mentioned two in the report: \* your scientific work would be enhanced by more experimental work; \* your learning could be even better if there were better attitudes to lessons and behaviour by a few of you, and teachers explained more clearly how you could reach the targets you are set. Good luck with your work and your future.

Yours truly

R Kapadia, HMI