



# The Radcliffe School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110532  
**LEA** Milton Keynes LEA  
**Inspection number** 283037  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Christopher Redman HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Aylesbury Street West
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Wolverton
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Milton Keynes MK12 5BT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01908312579
<b>Number on roll</b>	1043	<b>Fax number</b>	01908322718
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Rev Jeremy Trigg
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17 January 2003	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs John O'Donnell

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	283037

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## Introduction

When The Radcliffe School was inspected in November 2003, it was judged to require special measures because it was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) subsequently visited the school on four occasions to monitor its progress. The school was reinspected by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors in November 2005.

## Description of the school

The Radcliffe is a comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11-18. It serves an economically and socially mixed area on the north-western side of Milton Keynes. There are 1043 pupils on roll, including 129 students in the sixth form. About one in four of the pupils represent heritages other than white British and five per cent are at an early stage of acquiring English. Almost a quarter of the pupils in the main part of the school have been identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities, higher than is typical nationally; the proportion having a statement of special educational need is broadly in line with the national average. Overall, attainment on entry to the school is low. One in six of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. Mobility is very high. Since the school was inspected in November 2003, there have been two changes of headteacher. In September 2005, the school extended its age range to include 11 year olds.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, I am of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures, since it is now providing an acceptable standard of education for its pupils. Over the past two years, the school has improved significantly. Outstanding leadership by the headteacher and determined hard work by the staff have led to improvements in teaching and learning so that they are now satisfactory. Standards are not yet good enough, particularly in Key Stage 4, but they are improving. Behaviour has improved markedly and is now good. The inspection of November 2003 required the school to address issues concerned with management, teaching and learning, behaviour and social inclusion. Overall, there has been good progress in these areas. Nevertheless, the school recognises that some unevenness in quality still exists and further progress is required before the levels typically found in schools nationally are consistently achieved. The school is well placed to continue to improve. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards, supported by careful monitoring of teaching and learning, and extensive provision of after school sessions to help the pupils achieve well. As a result, the school now offers sound value for money.

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

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory; the school also judges the sixth form as satisfactory. The school offers a wide range of academic courses and has identified the need to extend the range of vocational courses. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with the students' previous attainment. All students participate in a well planned enrichment programme that includes academic support of students in Year 7 and Year 8, drawing upon the sixth formers' individual skills and helping them in their personal development.

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

\* Continue to improve teaching and learning. \* Raise standards further, particularly in Key Stage 4. \* Revise the delegation of responsibilities to senior managers so that they more coherently contribute to the school's improvement. \* Improve attendance in Year 11. \* Develop the curriculum further, particularly in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. In Key Stage 3, pupils are attaining standards that are a reasonable reflection of their prior attainments and capability. In Key Stage 4, while pupils are making satisfactory or good progress in their lessons, the standard of their work is not yet good enough. The results of the 2005 Key Stage 3 national tests showed a considerable improvement in English and small improvements in science and

mathematics. Taken together with the assessments made in other subjects, the results show that pupils are now making satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Examination results at Key Stage 4 in 2005 also improved, but the proportion of pupils gaining five or more good grades remained well below the national average and below the targets that the school had set itself. In lessons, pupils are currently making satisfactory or good progress. Sixth form, students taking advanced courses achieved results in 2005 that were broadly satisfactory given their prior attainment. However, the overall standard attained was below the national average. The school is developing ways of measuring the progress and achievement of students taking other courses.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being are good. The pupils are friendly, polite and proud of their school. Behaviour has improved significantly over the past year and the vast majority of pupils behave well. This was appreciated by a Year 9 pupil who explained that 'lessons are not disrupted now and we learn much better.' The relationships between the pupils and adults, and between pupils themselves, are good, as one pupil said 'There are lots of good teachers; they listen to you and do not treat you as kids. They know each student individually.' Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory overall. The pupils understand their rights and responsibilities and most are keen to perform their specific roles successfully. The pupils are aware of the cultural diversity represented by their peers and generally develop sound insights into the beliefs, values and customs of other cultures. They develop satisfactory spiritual awareness, but the provision in this area varies too widely at present, for example, in the contribution made by tutorial periods. Pupils enjoy their education and feel safe and secure. They enthusiastically take part in many physical activities and are developing a good awareness of healthy lifestyles. The pupils' contribution to the community is good. They are fully involved in the democratic process to elect the school council and organise events to raise funds for different charities. Two pupils have been elected as Junior MP and Deputy Junior MP by the city's secondary schools to represent them in local and national debates. Pupils prepare suitably for their future economic well-being through their studies. Attendance is broadly satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in Year 11. Nevertheless, it is improving because of the school's rigorous monitoring and actions over the past year.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved markedly and is now sound. Most of the teaching is at least satisfactory; about half is good, some of which has outstanding features. Most teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and share lesson objectives well with their class. Pupils said that the good teaching they receive motivates them to work hard. They also appreciate the high level of individual

support they receive from teachers. Pupils learn at a particularly good pace in lessons where there are high expectations of them to be mature independent learners. Where the teaching is satisfactory, relationships are good, pupils are managed reasonably well, and the content of the lesson is purposeful. The pace of learning, however, can be slower, and opportunities are sometimes missed to raise standards through well-crafted questions that challenge both the highest and lowest attaining pupils. Marking is regular, but of variable quality. Some marking is outstanding, providing excellent guidance for improvement, for example, in art and design, and in design and technology. There are good procedures for identifying those pupils who are falling behind their expected levels; they are given additional support in their examination work. Pupils receiving additional support for English, pupils with special educational needs, and pupils with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, make good progress when they are withdrawn for the well taught lessons in the Inclusion Unit. However, in other lessons, the quality of the support varies too widely although it is broadly satisfactory. There are not enough assistants to support the large number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Gifted and talented pupils are well supported through an extensive extra-curricular activities and enrichment programme, but in lessons they are sometimes not given sufficiently challenging work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum in the main school is broad and balanced. Students in Year 7 are taught by a small team of teachers, including advanced skills teachers. The curriculum for students in Years 8 and 9 has been revised, and is working well. The school previously found it difficult to staff design and technology, but pupils now have sufficient time for this subject in well taught courses. The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 has been changed to include a vocational course for all pupils; they also take fewer courses. This means that some subjects, such as music and drama, are offered only in additional twilight sessions; recruitment onto these courses has dropped considerably. The school is aware of this weakness and plans to reinstate these subjects for September 2006. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities including a well subscribed Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school offers a suitable range of academic courses and some vocational courses in the sixth form. Sound plans to extend the opportunities to include vocational courses are being developed as more students who have taken similar courses in Key Stage 4 enter the sixth form.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with many good features. The Year 7 and Year 8 pupils have been helped to settle in quickly. At each stage of their education, pupils are given appropriate advice and guidance to enable them to make informed choices. There are now good procedures in place for identifying vulnerable children at an early stage and giving them the support that they need. The system of assessment and tracking pupils' progress is now satisfactory and improving. The pupils are given

well-targeted support as they prepare for external examinations, though this has yet to have a significant effect on results. There are appropriate policies and procedures for child protection.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management. He has energetically addressed the issues restricting the school's provision, achieved a coherent approach to improvement, presented a clear vision for the school's future and raised the reputation of the school locally. He is held in high regard by the pupils, teachers, governors and the local authority. The impressive quality of his leadership has been an important factor in the developments leading to a satisfactory education for the pupils. The quality of leadership and management elsewhere varies too widely. At its best it is perceptive, rigorous, proactive and effective, but in some areas, including within parts of the senior leadership team, this desirable level has yet to be achieved. The leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Strategic management is mostly good. Training and careful recruitment have considerably strengthened the expertise available to the school. The teachers and supporting adults have worked hard to improve their practice and implement the policies and procedures that have brought coherence to the school's work. The management system suitably allows middle and senior managers to undertake key tasks, but within the senior leadership team, responsibilities are not equitably delegated or executed with adequate coherence. The comprehensive systems for monitoring the school's work have led to a good understanding of what is done well and the areas that still require improvement. Governance has improved significantly and is now good. Governors monitor the school's work well and appropriately require managers to justify their actions. They have worked hard to resolve the large budget deficit and have agreed a suitable recovery plan with the local authority. Good financial management has allowed the school to improve its resources and accommodation. The local authority has supported the school well through careful monitoring, good advice and a determination that the school's provision should improve quickly.

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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	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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
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

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

### The quality of provision

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

<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	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	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	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**

You may remember that a team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out how good it was and how well you are doing. Thank you for being so friendly and telling to us about your work and what you think of your school. I am writing to let your know our judgements.

Your school has improved considerably over the past two years. As a result, it no longer requires special measures since it is providing you with an acceptable standard of education. You told us that behaviour is much better and we agree. Lessons are rarely disrupted and this has allowed you to learn more effectively. You also told us that your teachers listen to you and treat you as mature people. We noticed that relationships between yourselves and with your teachers are now good. Many of you are enjoying learning; this was not the case two years ago. There is a wide range of after school activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, that we know you enjoy attending.

You are lucky to have such a talented headteacher as Mr O'Donnell. He has worked hard with your teachers to ensure improvements to the school have happened quickly. We agree with your teachers that the school can be even better. The standard of your work is not as good as it should be, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and we have asked your teachers to make further improvements so that you can learn more quickly. For the older students, we agree with the school that you need a wider range of subjects from which to select when choosing options. We know you understand how important it is to do well in examinations and are confident that you will study hard, particularly completing your homework and coursework. It is important to attend school regularly if your work is to improve. While attendance is satisfactory for most of you, it is not satisfactory in Year 11; this needs improvement. We enjoyed our two days with you. If you continue to work hard and pay attention to your teachers, you will play an important part in making your school even better than it is now.