

The Ravensbourne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101679
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	286149
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1438
6th form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Vincent
Headteacher	Mr P Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	3 February 2003
School address	Hayes Lane Bromley BR2 9EH
Telephone number	020 8460 0083
Fax number	020 8460 7525

Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one HMI and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Ravensbourne School is a larger-than-average, mixed comprehensive school with specialist status in Media Arts. It is increasingly popular in the area. Most students are of White British heritage but there is a good mix of students from minority ethnic groups. The school admits a number of students from outside Bromley. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average but is slightly below for those with English as an additional language (EAL). There is a higher than average proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'Ravensbourne is now the place to go to', said a confident student who, like many other students, felt proud to be a member of 'such an exciting and creative community'. The school has improved markedly since its last inspection and provides an excellent education for the increasing number of students it attracts. Standards are good in the main school and average in the sixth form, but students of all abilities make excellent progress given their attainment on entry. The headteacher and his senior team provide very strong leadership and direction and continually focus on raising standards and achievement even further. Excellent procedures for tracking and monitoring the performance of all aspects of the school's work have resulted in high quality teaching and learning in most lessons although the school recognises that not all teaching in Years 7 to 11 has yet reached the level of the best. There is excellent curriculum provision with growing international and vocational components so that the vast majority of students have the opportunity to study the courses they want.

Excellent care, guidance and support mechanisms ensure that students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school has embarked on the 'Challenge Award' which has improved provision for gifted and talented students. Students enjoy coming to school. They value highly the many opportunities they have for developing their own leadership skills and experiencing so many different, and stimulating, activities. Through these experiences students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is very strong. One student was impressed with the way the school 'gave us the opportunity to interview the new Key Stage 3 co-ordinator'. Another student said he welcomed the way teachers had helped him 'develop from a child to an adult.' Other students liked going to local primary schools and working with younger children 'to help teach them about things'. A large number of students talked animatedly about their roles in annual dramatic and musical productions. The school's Media Arts status has enabled it to develop exciting projects with opportunities for students to develop a wide range of creative skills such as selling their wares in a local shopping complex to working with the police to create a DVD to explore the pitfalls of stereotyping amongst the young and older members of the community. Behaviour is good and in lessons students are willing to learn and do well.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding because of the excellent curriculum and the high quality of care, support and guidance provided for each and every student. Standards are average because a high proportion of students are admitted from outside Bromley who generally have lower attainment than internal students who progress to the sixth form. Nevertheless, students achieve very well academically and their personal development is excellent. This is because the school particularly focuses on the individual needs of the wide range of learners. Students speak enthusiastically about the support and guidance they receive. This has resulted in the development of good study skills that support their independent learning. Students comment very favourably about the system for moving into the sixth form, which ensures they select appropriate courses that lead to good career development. The curriculum focuses on providing a variety of courses without compromising quality and teaching is challenging and stimulating. Many clubs and other out-of-hours activities enhance the quality of education in the sixth form and students appreciate their diversity. Aspirational leadership and management are having a real impact on achievement and it encourages good retention rates. In the words of

one student, 'The head of sixth form is a real inspiration to us.' Visits from external agencies, charity work and educational visits enhance student's experiences and prepare them well for university or the world of work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the best teaching practice is more widely developed across the school to increase the proportion of excellent lessons

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Attainment on entry to year 7 is roughly in line with students nationally. In 2006 students made good and accelerating progress in Years 7 - 9, but outstanding progress in Years 10 and 11, particularly in mathematics and English, for almost all student groups. This ranks the school in the top two percent nationally. Standards are now broadly average in Years 7 - 9 and improving, particularly so in English where students performed extremely well. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have been well above average for the past three years. Boys are making relatively better progress than girls in the early years, particularly those arriving with lower than average attainment from primary school. Students with learning difficulties make better progress than those nationally because of high expectations, an appropriate curriculum and the additional support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Students benefit from many opportunities to learn about different cultures through the excellent links with schools in four different continents. Students relate well to one another and to their teachers, and their behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. They enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by their good attendance, and their enthusiastic participation in the wide range of clubs, and cultural and sporting activities which the school offers. Students feel safe in school because they feel that any bullying is dealt with effectively. They know that there are many people in the school community, both adults and fellow-students, to whom they can turn for help if they need it. Their commitment to adopting healthy lifestyles is demonstrated by their choice of foods at lunchtime and their willingness to take part in sporting activities. Students make an excellent contribution to the school, local and wider communities, through the many opportunities they have for taking responsibility, for example the 'big brother/big sister' mentoring scheme, and through raising money for a range of international charities. They are confident enough to voice any concerns they may have about the school because they believe, rightly, that the school will listen to and act upon these concerns. Students are developing into confident and mature young people, who are well equipped to deal with the challenges they will face when they enter the work-place or progress to higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding in the sixth form and good in the main school, where there are some examples of outstanding practice. In mathematical investigations students explore and puzzle out answers, and practise their newly-learned vocabulary by explaining to others. Teachers are encouraged to innovate and be creative and this is leading to more exciting lessons where students are more actively involved. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well, not just in class, but also in allowing pupils to work independently. It also facilitates better communication with parents. Some teachers' marking shows pupils how well they are doing and how to improve but this good practice is not consistent. Pupils say they have fun learning at school and their good attendance is testament to this. They see classrooms as safe environments to make mistakes in because of the very good relationships they have with teachers and support staff. Students learn to evaluate their own work and how to co-operate with others and work independently. This prepares them very well for the sixth form where their self-evaluation is mature, honest and accurate. Students behave well in lessons and listen to the teachers, except where the quality of teaching is less than good and the pace flags. The school is effective in developing teachers' skills. There is a good system of lesson observations linked to further training and support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Curriculum planning is outstanding. It is informed by very careful consideration of students' needs and preferences. The school takes great care to consult students on what should be offered as examination options. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported most effectively by a curriculum which is matched closely to their needs. Extra provision for English and mathematics is provided at Key Stage 3 which enhances literacy and numeracy across the curriculum and contributes to the good progress in most subjects by the end of year 9. There is a good mix of vocational and traditional courses in years 14–19 that provide a good range of study programmes. Flexible curriculum arrangements for gifted and talented students enable early entry to GCSE exams in KS3. As a result, some students pursue GCE A/S in such subjects as Graphics and Art in years 10 and 11. This policy of extending the provision for gifted and talented is continued in the sixth form where a large number of successful entries have been made in modules of university courses. Provision and use of ICT to enhance learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. All students are now successfully entered for exams in ICT. There is a strong work-related dimension to the curriculum. All students are entered for a condensed GCSE in and;quot;Preparation for Workand;quot; and all sixth form students continue their development of wider key skills by taking a university recognised qualification.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Staff are highly committed to providing levels of support to enable every student to achieve as well as they are able. The school makes its expectations of students in terms of behaviour very clear, and as a result students and their parents recognize that behaviour has improved. The school provides excellent support for vulnerable students, including those who are facing challenging home circumstances. It has established productive links with parents and with a range of organisations in order to do this effectively. The school can point to many 'success stories' where many students have achieved far better than could have been expected. Highly effective systems for tracking students' academic progress ensure that underperformance is picked up and its causes addressed. Students are productively involved in setting their own targets and know what they need to do to achieve them. The school has established excellent procedures for making sure that students are well informed about their options for Years 10 and 11 and for the 6th form. In the words of one student, teachers 'really helped us to choose our GCSE options carefully and spent time talking to us individually.' Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are secure.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school has undergone some important changes since the last inspection and the headteacher and his senior team have worked extremely hard to ensure that the inevitable debates and anxieties that accompany change, have not derailed the improvement process. The headteacher's vision and drive has brought success for the school and his outstanding leadership has enabled others to develop their leadership roles most effectively. The establishment of discrete phases within the school, 'schools within the school', has meant that key leaders have school-wide responsibilities for their phase and this has improved the quality of performance management markedly. Staff are recruited on the basis that they will strive relentlessly for ongoing improvements and they know they will be held to account otherwise. There is now a well developed culture of self-evaluation and openness to share good practice so that both subject and school-wide expectations and targets are challenging. Governors provide an excellent balance of support and challenge for the school. They are themselves a good mix of new and experienced members, all with a desire to see the school succeed and improve further its standing in the community. These strengths, combined with the increasingly strong track record of achieving and sustaining better standards and exceptional progress over time, mean that the school has an excellent capacity to improve still further.

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Annex A

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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
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	2	3
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	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	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

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	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Ravensbourne School, Bromley, BR2 9EH

I am writing to inform you of the findings of our recent inspection of your school. We would like to thank those students who discussed aspects of their education with us.

You will be pleased to know that we thought your school was outstanding. You achieve good results in the main school and continue to make excellent progress in the sixth form. The way you develop as young people is impressive. Teaching is good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. You are extremely well cared for. The creative ethos at Ravensbourne is excellent and you are provided with many opportunities to develop your leadership skills and take responsibility for aspects of your own learning. You are proud to belong to the school and get on well with your teachers. The headteacher and his senior team make sure that you concentrate hard on your learning to get the best results you can. There are lots of improvements being made to the school and you can help in this process by keeping your teachers informed about how you feel about the changes.

We have asked the school to:

- Spread the most interesting teaching more widely across the school

Best wishes for the future and particularly to all of you who are currently sitting examinations.

Yours faithfully

Peter Limm
Her Majesty's Inspector