

Rutlish School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102679
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	286458
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Lynes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	1133
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Mills
Headteacher	Mr R Doyle
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001
School address	Watery Lane Merton Park London SW20 9AD
Telephone number	020 8542 1212
Fax number	020 8544 0580

Age group	11–16
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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

Rutlish is a larger than average school set in a very pleasant location, which benefits from good facilities and accommodation. Student numbers have grown significantly since the last inspection, when it was a 12-16 school. This is due to the reorganisation of schools by the local authority. The number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds is significantly higher than the national average; only a small minority are at the early stages of learning English.

The school achieved specialist status in mathematics and computing in 2005. The headteacher in post at the time of this inspection was due to retire at the end of the academic year. The governing body had successfully appointed a new headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rutlish is a satisfactory school which takes good care of its students and ensures their good personal development. Standards are broadly average and academic progress is satisfactory, particularly at Key Stage 4, and this is the key reason why it is not yet a good school.

Rutlish has faced some tough challenges since the last inspection, including a significant increase in student numbers and budgetary difficulties. The headteacher has worked hard with the governing body to successfully deal with these challenges, and ensure their minimal disruption to the life of the school. During this period the school achieved specialist status; which has improved resources but has yet to impact on achievement and standards. The majority of parents who made their views known to inspectors (about a tenth of all parents) were very positive about the school, but a significant minority felt the school could do more to address their concerns and reflect their views.

The headteacher leads the school with great integrity, good strategic vision on most aspects of the school's work, and a deeply felt commitment to inclusion. This means that the school works hard to ensure that some very challenging students make good progress in their personal development. Vulnerable students receive particularly good care. Students generally feel safe and happy. One boy in Year 8 movingly told inspectors that he had been bullied in his previous school, but that this was not the case at Rutlish because teachers 'really look out for me'.

The senior leadership team (SLT) have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and take good action to address some important areas. For example, attendance declined sharply last year. In response, the SLT identified additional resources and worked well with the local authority to put in a range of robust strategies which are now improving attendance. However, the SLT has not yet taken similarly concerted action or focused its monitoring well enough to ensure that teaching and learning improve, and that students meet challenging targets, particularly at Key Stage 4. Whilst satisfactory, not all teaching fully engages students and encourages active learning. The school accepts this, and there are some positive signs that achievement is improving for the current Year 10. This is partly as a result of some improvements to the curriculum; however, it does not yet fully meet the needs of all learners, particularly in the limited vocational opportunities that it offers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that senior leaders take concerted action, by using tighter monitoring to improve student achievement at Key Stage 4
- Ensure that a greater proportion of lessons are interesting, exciting and encourage active learning
- Develop a more flexible, engaging curriculum at Key Stage 4 that meets all learners' needs.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance in one respect is inadequate: in how effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets. A small proportion of schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Students make good progress at Key Stage 3. This progress is not maintained in Key Stage 4, where there has been a declining trend over the past two years. The school was able to provide convincing evidence to suggest that the current Year 11 are on target to improve the 2006 five A*-C figure, which will again represent satisfactory achievement. This means that students' academic progress overall is satisfactory.

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards in line with the national average. The school's results in the 2006 tests taken at the end of Year 9 were in line with the national average for boys. These results have been rising since 2004. Students made particularly good progress in mathematics and in English, because of careful teaching and monitoring.

This good progress is not capitalised on at Key Stage 4 where, although satisfactory overall, achievement has declined. The students who took GCSE examinations in 2006 made satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11. Results in the GCSE examinations are below those of boys nationally. The proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades including English and mathematics was below the national average. Students for whom English is not their first language and those with learning difficulties (LDD) and disabilities are well supported and make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students are proud of the school and enjoy attending, although some think that their lessons could be more interesting. Attendance is satisfactory. It is below average but improving as a result of robust action by the school. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is good. They eat healthily at school and take advantage of the wide range of sporting activities on offer. Some students are concerned that there is some smoking in the toilets. The school is aware of this and is now taking action. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Their moral and social development through the citizenship programme is a major strength. Vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), are well prepared for leading an independent life. Students report that they feel safe and secure. Students generally behave well in class and around the building but a minority can be disruptive. The schools' strategy to improve behaviour has had a positive impact. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past two years although the level of fixed term exclusions is very high. Few incidents of bullying or racism are recorded. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They receive a good grounding in work-related learning but progress with basic skills is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning are satisfactory. While there are good examples of teaching, the best practice is not yet consistent across the school and this is confirmed by students. A system of monitoring and support is in place but this needs to be

developed further to address the variation across and within the school, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Where teaching is good lessons are well planned to engage students and behaviour is managed effectively. Teachers display good knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject and work is matched to students' needs. Relationships are good and students are encouraged to share ideas with their peers.

In the few less effective lessons, teachers do not plan well enough to provide work which meets students' individual needs, enhances their speaking and listening skills or develops independent learning. As a result, some students become disengaged as lessons progress, resulting in low-level disruption which inhibits effective learning.

Students' work seen during the inspection was regularly marked and some comments outlined how students could improve their work and progress in the subject. Assessment data is being used more effectively to track and support student achievement. However, the school recognises the need to continue to develop these practices across the school, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory in meeting the range of needs of most students. In Years 7-11, the curriculum meets statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11 the school has recognised that the range of opportunities and subjects available to students is not comprehensive enough to meet their wide-ranging needs and interests. Some improvements have been made this year to the Year 10 curriculum and these are beginning to have a positive impact on motivation and standards. A programme of withdrawal and in-class support ensures less able or vulnerable students make satisfactory progress. The personal, social and health education, citizenship and religious education lessons contribute very well to developing thoughtful and responsible young adults. A wide range of out of school hours activities enriches the students' curriculum. These are appreciated by students and well supported. Although the provision for work-related learning is good overall, the range of vocational courses on offer is very limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory, and pastoral care is good. Students like their school and feel that any problems will be dealt with promptly. The school promotes a supportive atmosphere; for example an innovative use of Year 11 mentors in anti-bullying work encourages students to care for each other. One year 9 student said: 'everyone looks out for each other'. Procedures to ensure the safety of students are secure and students generally feel safe in school and report good supervision by staff. The school actively promotes the health, safety and well being of students. Advice and guidance on career paths and upper school courses allows students to make informed and sensible decisions. The needs of vulnerable students are very well cared for; for example through the progress centre where an inclusive and supportive atmosphere helps students raise their self esteem and receive appropriate individualised support. The school is developing systematic processes to track student progress and to inform students of their next step in learning. Intervention to tackle underachievement does take place currently, but this is not yet consistent across the school at all levels. Students are therefore not receiving enough support to reach challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher offers a strong strategic lead and has an inclusive vision for the school which is appreciated by students. He has led the school through some turbulent times since the last inspection. The rapid expansion of student numbers was handled well and he and the governing body have worked hard to improve the finances of the school. These are significant achievements.

However, the impact of senior leadership on student achievement has been only satisfactory. This is due to insufficient rigour in following through the monitoring of the progress of students and the quality of teaching and learning. There are satisfactory systems in place to monitor both achievement and teaching and some analysis takes place. However, these systems are variable across the school and do not yet focus on the action needed to improve outcomes for students. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They do not yet sufficiently challenge and support teachers to ensure that learning is more engaging and exciting, and that students are enabled to make good progress. There is evidence of some emerging strengths at middle manager level. For example, there has been good progress in science in tackling the significant underachievement at Key Stage 4. This is attributable to the head of department's clear understanding of the issues impacting on student achievement and tackling them effectively with good support from her line manager. This provides a good example of satisfactory capacity to improve.

The governing body is active and ensures that all statutory requirements are met. They have a good understanding of the school and have handled the succession of the incoming headteacher very well.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	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	4
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

29 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Rutlish School, London, SW20 9AD

Thank you for your contribution to this inspection. We enjoyed visiting your school and particularly spending time with you and finding out your views. I am writing to summarise our findings, but you can download the complete report from www.ofsted.gov.uk.

You told us that you like the school and feel safe and generally happy. We could see that and agree with you that the school cares for you very well. You told us that there was little bullying and few racist incidents, and any that occurred you were confident would be dealt with effectively. A few of you expressed concerns about boys smoking in the toilets. Some of you also told us that some lessons were not as interesting as they could be. The school is aware of both of these concerns.

We found that whilst your personal development is good, you do not make as good progress academically, particularly in Years 10 and 11. That is why we have judged the school to be satisfactory, and asked it to make improvements in the following areas:

- the way in which teachers check on progress, in order to improve achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- increase the number of interesting and exciting lessons.
- offer you a greater range of interesting and relevant courses, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

I am sure that you will want to do your best to support the new headteacher in making sure that these things happen.

I wish you all the very best for your futures,

Michael Lynes
Her Majesty's Inspector