



# Princes Risborough

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 110489  
**Local Authority** Buckinghamshire  
**Inspection number** 288690  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Emma Ing HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)	<b>School address</b>	Merton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Princes Risborough
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19		HP27 0DT
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01844 345496
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	964	<b>Fax number</b>	01844 346147
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	133		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs A Kent
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr P Rowe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2004		

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–19	11–12 October 2006	288690

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspector and five additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Princes Risborough is an average sized secondary school that is non-selective within a selective authority. Nevertheless, the standards attained by students entering the school are in line with national averages although there are fewer high attaining students than normally found in comprehensive schools. The school has a specialist communication unit for seventeen students on the autistic spectrum and, in consequence, has a higher proportion of students with statements of special educational needs than most schools although the proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average. Students come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds but overall there is less deprivation than in other areas.

Over two thirds of the students are from White British backgrounds with small proportions of students from a range of other ethnic backgrounds.

The school became a specialist technology college in 2001.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and governors, backed by a strong senior management team and leaders with commitment and enthusiasm at other levels in the school have led to considerable improvement over the past two years. This remarked upon by parents and students alike, who greatly value the changes made. Students are proud to be members of their school, which now offers a satisfactory and in some respects good education. It has demonstrated very good capacity to improve and its own data show that it is on track to become even better. The school's previous designation as having serious weaknesses no longer applies. The turnaround has been made despite very tight financial restraints determined by the need to eliminate a sizeable deficit budget, now largely achieved. The school thus provides good value for money.

Many of the excellent systems and procedures now in place are only just beginning to realise the intended improved outcomes. One area in which this is the case is the progress made by students in their learning. Between joining the school in Year 7 and finishing in Year 11 students make satisfactory progress and the standards they reach are in line with national averages. All students are set challenging targets and their progress towards these is monitored. In many departments this is done very well and where students are not making the progress they should, parents are informed and guidance and support are given to ensure that this is rectified. In the sixth form too students make satisfactory progress.

It is a strong element of the ethos of the school that the needs and well-being of students are central to all that it does. It is inclusive and has high expectations of all students. As a result the school offers very good opportunities for them to develop into responsible well-rounded individuals. Although there remain pockets of students who do not always conform to the norms of good behaviour set by the majority, most students are self-assured, courteous and fully engaged in the life of the school. The personal development and well-being of students is thus good. A significant number of parents commented on how their children's confidence has grown and also on their enjoyment of school. As one wrote, 'Over the last year I have seen my daughter develop from a shy, under-confident girl to a confident happy young lady. She enjoys school, enjoys her learning and is achieving well'.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It meets the needs of most students and is being suitably developed by the school. Within lessons, however, reference is not made to the world outside school sufficiently well to ensure that their understanding of it is broadened. Opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities are outstanding. Students contribute both to the school and the outside community in a variety of important ways. They agree with those parents who told us that they enjoy school and their learning.

Much of the learning in the school is good, well supported by effective lessons and helpful feedback from teachers. However, although the school has in place very efficient systems for senior leaders to develop the quality of teaching and improving learning,

overall it remains satisfactory because not all teachers are delivering the good lessons that lead to students making good progress. Equally, not all implement the school's behaviour management policy as they should. The role of middle managers in securing improvement and consistency in these areas is not fully developed.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form provides students with a good education. Students made satisfactory progress leading up to the 2005 and 2006 examinations. Standards and achievement are continuing to improve because much has been done to improve the quality of both teaching and learning which are now good. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and make good use of assessment to ensure that students know their next steps. Rigorous assessment and tracking of progress ensure that lessons can be matched to students' needs.

Sixth form students make a very important contribution to the life of the school and are keen to take on responsibility. They receive very good support and guidance in their studies and in their higher education and career choices. Relationships between teachers and students are relaxed and respectful. The sixth form is well led. By its recent improvement the school has demonstrated its good capacity to improve the sixth form still further.

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

- Ensure that all groups of learners are enabled to make good progress by ensuring that all teaching is good and that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners.
- Strengthen the role of middle managers in developing the quality of teaching in subject areas.
- Ensure that all staff consistently implement the policies of the school.
- Make sure that students' learning is placed in a wider context that broadens their understanding of the world in which they and others live.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Students enter the school with broadly average standards of prior attainment, although, because this is a non-selective school in a selective authority, there are fewer high attaining students than is the case nationally. Standards have been rising over the past two years and are now above the national average at Key Stage 3 and in line with the national average in Key Stage 4. This masks quite wide variations between and within departments, some, such as Business Studies, English, Citizenship and Geography, enable students to make very good progress whilst in others such as mathematics, progress is satisfactory. Overall progress is satisfactory and is broadly similar for all different groups of learners. Good progress is made by students between Key Stages 2 and 3.

The school sets challenging targets and an increasing proportion of learners is meeting these. Good systems are in place to ensure that this is the case and to support individuals who are not achieving their potential. According to the school's reliable data, students are on track to reach higher standards and demonstrate better rates of improvement in national tests and examinations next year.

Progress made by sixth form students is satisfactory and improving. The school has identified and addressed underachievement of some students in a minority of subjects, including mathematics.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' behaviour, which was an area of concern at the last inspection, is now very much improved throughout the school. Students are calm, courteous and purposeful around the school creating a happy atmosphere. Behaviour in lessons is generally good, although a small minority of students become easily distracted and unmotivated in response to teaching which does not interest and engage them. The school council vigorously contributes to the development of the school and participation in the varied activities that the school offers is very good. Older students take important responsibilities in leading the school and in guiding and supporting others. Students are well informed about healthy lifestyles and many participate in a good deal of physical activity. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Students feel safe, cared for and well supported. They know how to work and behave safely. Their understanding of the world of work is sound but their world view is quite narrow. They have a good understanding of the career opportunities open to them.

Students based in the communication unit also enjoy school and make good progress in their personal development. An older student commented, 'I'm happy to be here, when I came I was immature, but now I can cope'.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly over the past two years. The school has introduced clear policies and strategies that all teachers are expected to follow. Most teachers implement these guidelines effectively and plan and deliver their lessons well using a range of teaching and learning styles. These lessons engage the students by being relevant and are often linked to good classroom control and high teacher expectations. They enable students to make good progress.

Many teachers are developing good skills in assessing the learning of the students in lessons using a range of questioning techniques and involve the students in their own learning. They have ensured that students are fully aware of their target levels or grades and they give good guidance on how students can improve. Teaching in the sixth form is good and is characterised by very good discussion.

However, not all teachers are working at this level and in some lessons the learning is less secure for a variety of reasons such as lack of pace, poor explanations or unclear instructions and weak behaviour management.

Students with special educational needs are generally well supported by teachers and teaching assistants and are given suitable support material to enable them to make progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

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

The curriculum has been developed over the past two years and is now fully compliant with all statutory regulations. In particular the delivery of citizenship has been well implemented across all years. Some aspects of the curriculum, such as work related learning and multicultural studies, whilst delivered to a satisfactory degree, are not yet embedded across the curriculum. In the sixth form students can choose from a range of academic and vocational courses; however there is insufficient provision for less able students who would benefit from Level 2 courses.

Participation rates in the specialist areas of mathematics, science and design and technology have gone up because all students study each of these subjects at a high level together with a new, relevant programme for information and communication technology (ICT).

The school has recognised that the subjects previously offered in Key Stage 4 were not totally suitable for some students. This resulted in these students gaining few, if any, GCSE qualifications. The recently introduced vocational college links and ICT courses are overcoming this issue. These subjects are enjoyed by the students and are more relevant to their needs. Plans are well advanced to extend the range of subjects being offered to all students in September 2007 which will further improve provision.

An extended enrichment session is held weekly for all students and offers a wide range of support and other activities. This is an outstanding addition to the curriculum. The extra curriculum provision is extensive with many teachers offering sports alongside a variety of clubs and curriculum support opportunities.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

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

All students are well cared for and supported both academically and socially. There are good procedures to track students' progress and inform them how well they are

doing. They are set challenging targets and progress towards them is carefully monitored. Students who are in danger of underachieving or whose behaviour seems likely to impede their progress are identified at an early stage and support is given. Good use is made of the contribution of a range of outside agencies to ensure that support meets the needs of individual students. A great deal of effort goes into involving parents in their children's learning. For example parents of Year 7 pupils are invited to the school to find out about how children learn and how they can help with this. Student planners recording homework and other details are maintained although they are not checked as rigorously by all staff, as they are by some.

There has been significant improvement in the rigour and efficiency with which the school's checks on health and safety are carried out and these are now satisfactory.

The provision for students in the communication unit is satisfactory overall and good for the sixth form students. They are given good care and support and are enabled to be included into main school. The individual education plans are effective and student's targets are regularly reviewed.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. Members of the school community share an ambition that it will provide a first class education to all its students. The headteacher has established a very effective senior team and with them has put in place strategies and systems that have already led to significant improvement in the quality of provision. Leaders of the school have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and use data very proficiently to monitor its own performance in many different areas. They are very well placed to make further improvement.

Governors are efficient and well organised and have a range of good systems in place to hold the school to account and both to challenge and support leaders and managers.

The specialist department has overcome major challenges, such as the need to recruit sufficient suitably qualified staff, to successfully establish satisfactory and in parts good provision in this subject area. The school is now well placed to extend its contribution to the local community, such as through working with other schools, and so meet these as yet less well developed aspects of its responsibilities as a specialist school.

The leadership and management of the communication unit are satisfactory. Priorities for improvement are identified based on a regular review of students' needs; however the monitoring of learning and teaching within the mainstream provision is insufficient to ensure consistent good progress.

The excellent support that senior leaders give leaders at other levels in the school is well managed. Performance management is used effectively to ensure that everyone



is focused on improvement. Leaders of subjects and of year groups show good potential. They are committed and are developing rigour in diagnosing the strength and weaknesses within their area of responsibility. Most are using data effectively to drive up standards and have developed robust plans for improvement. Their role in monitoring progress towards school targets is less well advanced and there is scope for further development of their role in supporting department members to become more effective teachers.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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	3	3
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	2	
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	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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**

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave me and my team of inspectors when we visited your school recently. We were delighted to meet such confident and courteous young people and thoroughly enjoyed both talking to you and watching you at work. I am writing to let you know what we thought about your school.

First, and most importantly, as both you and your parents told us, it is clear that your school has made huge improvements in the two years since your last inspection. It now provides you with a satisfactory education. Moreover, your head teacher has proved that the school is capable of making further big improvements. We consider his leadership and that of the governors to be outstanding and they are well supported by leaders throughout the school, including school council representatives.

You and your parents told us that you enjoy your education. We observed that you are rightly proud of your school. You are making at least satisfactory progress in your work. You are set challenging targets and helped to reach them. Most of you are well behaved, but some of you need to work on this, particularly when you are tempted to mess about in lessons. You contribute well both to the school and to the outside community. We were impressed by the peer mentoring scheme and by the role that school council takes. We were also very impressed by enrichment hour and the wide range of opportunities that you have for after school activities.

We talked to your headteacher about the fact that some things in the school such as learning, behaviour and marking of books are better in some areas than in others. We have asked him to ensure that the school achieves the consistently good standards that are evident where such things were done well. We have also asked the school to develop your engagement in learning. This may include offering different courses. You will have a vital role to play in making such changes, as it is important for staff to get a clear picture of which courses would be right for you. All of you might consider too, how you could help teachers to make lessons more exciting and adventurous. We judged that you, the students, have a sound understanding of the outside world and working life, but we have asked the school help you develop this further by ensuring that your learning makes reference to it more fully.

I hope that this feedback is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Emma IngHer Majesty's Inspector