



Rushcliffe School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122860
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292531
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector Bob Roberts HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Boundary Road
School category	Community		West Bridgford, West Bridgford
Age range of pupils	11–18		Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG2 7BW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01159 744050
Number on roll (school)	1311	Fax number	01159 744051
Number on roll (6th form)	197		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Graham Marson
		Headteacher	Mr Robert Gullis
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	31 January –1 February 2007	292531

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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

Rushcliffe School is a larger than average school, occupying a single site alongside Rushcliffe Leisure Centre in the West Bridgford suburb of Nottingham. Since the last inspection the school has increasingly drawn its pupils from a wider area than before, including the inner city as well as the districts and villages on the south side of the city. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is above average. The proportion eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Almost 20% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the school has on its role an average number for whom English is not their first language. The school has received approval to become a specialist science college from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rushcliffe School is providing a satisfactory standard of education. Many aspects of its work are good. The school has good and highly committed leadership, not only from the headteacher but from the senior leadership team and the governors. As the school's pupils have come from increasingly wide and diverse backgrounds in recent years, it has shown determination to develop a truly supportive and inclusive ethos, and in this it has been successful.

Pupils' personal development is good. They very much enjoy coming to school. Large numbers take part in the wide range of activities that are provided for them. Pupils feel that their voice is heard, not least through year and school councils, and the contribution that they make both to the community of the school and locally is outstanding. Attendance is good and improving. Behaviour, which was an issue at the last inspection, is good both in classrooms and around the site. Pupils feel safe and say there is little bullying. They appreciate the help and support that is available to them if they need it. The support provided for particularly vulnerable pupils, such as those looked after by the local authority, is very good. The progress and well-being of those from minority ethnic backgrounds is monitored very carefully. Most pupils are conscious of health issues, and the sporting opportunities open to them help their development in this respect. They are well prepared for adult life in a multi-cultural society.

The academic progress made by pupils is satisfactory. They enter the school with higher levels of attainment than average, and make satisfactory progress towards achieving above average standards. Those pupils who enter the sixth form make good progress there. Some groups of pupils, however, do not make the progress they should. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Although much of the teaching is good, particularly in the sixth form, the school's own view of the quality of its teaching has been over-generous and the processes involved in monitoring and improving teaching lack sufficient rigour. The curriculum is good, meeting the needs of individual pupils well. The sixth form curriculum available at the school is a purely academic one and the school is planning, in collaboration with others, to provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of a wider range of pupils more effectively.

Almost two hundred parents responded to the questionnaire that accompanied the inspection. Three quarters were positive in their views of the school. Since the last inspection, there have been significant areas of improvement, notably in the provision for personal development and in the sixth form. The school has a satisfactory awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and is firmly set on the goal of improving progress and standards further. The school has a good capacity to improve and offers satisfactory value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form's effectiveness is good. Students enjoy the challenge of learning from good teaching. They achieve well, make good progress and reach above national average standards on AS and A-level courses. Students' personal development is outstanding. They are mature and purposeful learners, and many contribute very well to the main school community. Almost all students complete their courses. Students take advantage of many worthwhile opportunities to extend their experience and qualifications towards future economic independence. They are very well supported by tutors and teachers. They receive helpful guidance about opportunities in higher education and careers. The curriculum gives a good choice, albeit of almost exclusively advanced level courses. Leadership and management are good, and the sixth form gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of pupils, particularly lower attainers, by developing more rigorous systems to monitor and improve the quality of teaching.
- In collaboration with partners, develop more flexible post-16 provision to meet the needs of students more effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall achievement of pupils is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. By the time they take the national tests at the end of Year 9, pupils are reaching high standards and their progress is good. Until 2005, their progress had been in line with expectations, but in 2006 improved results indicated that the rate of progress had improved. These standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science and overall they have been rising steadily at a rate that is above the national rate. Given their starting points, there is still further room for improvement in the proportion of pupils that reach the very highest levels.

At GCSE, the overall levels of attainment are high and most of the indicators are above the national averages. For example, in 2006 the percentage of pupils attaining five or more good passes is 69% compared to a national average in 2005 of 57%. When the figure is adjusted to include passes in English and mathematics, it only comes down slightly to 65%, a figure which is well above the comparable national figure. However, statistics such as these mask the fact that the progress that has been made overall by pupils is no more than might be expected of them. Furthermore, the progress made by some groups of pupils has been less than expected. Pupils with lower attainment levels do not do as well as they should, and this includes some of those with learning difficulties.

In the last two years the school has coped very well with small numbers of pupils who have had challenging attitudes and behaviour. Many of these pupils have achieved well and progressed to positive destinations beyond the school. The school is rigorous in analysing its results from the perspective of ethnic origin and there are no significant differences in the progress made by pupils from different backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Pupils enjoy being part of the school, reflected in their good and improving attendance. The work of the Pupil Support Unit is exemplary and is central to the life of the school; the team work very effectively in enabling inclusion, equality of opportunity, and coordinating appropriate support to ensure that all pupils develop well. The levels of participation in extra-curricular opportunities are high; the range of opportunities available is impressive and innovative, including such offerings as Citizens Club, Imagination Station and Showcase lunch club. Behaviour, and the attitudes of pupils towards each other and to adults, is generally good around the site. Registration time is not used consistently as a focus for starting the day's learning. The school does not meet the requirement to hold an act of collective worship, although those assemblies that are held are used well for the celebration of success. Provision for work-related learning and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils are given the knowledge and understanding necessary to equip them to adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles. Pupils develop skills that will contribute to their economic well-being through activities enriching their experiences at school, as well as the work experience programme, which provides a good opportunity for pupils to begin using these skills effectively in the real world. There are many opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to their community; year councils and the school council are viewed positively, and most pupils demonstrate awareness and understanding of the needs of others through fund-raising activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school's own view that the overall quality of teaching is good is not one that inspectors support. In the majority of lessons, teaching leads to at least sound learning and pupils make satisfactory progress as a result. However, some examples of good and outstanding teaching were seen. In the best lessons, pupils are excited by challenges. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, groups of pupils were seen confidently presenting projects on marketing

new pop bands of their own invention, using media and marketing language, as the rest of the class assessed their presentations and gave thoughtful feedback. In some, more pedestrian lessons, pupils are not stimulated well enough. They are not fully engaged in discussions or activities and become bored. In the least effective lessons, this sometimes leads to unsatisfactory behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities benefit from the good quality support provided by teaching assistants. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning, an issue in the last inspection, has improved substantially.

There is a clear policy on assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress. Assessment is used well to follow the progress of pupils and to provide support for those who underachieve. Although assessment methods are thoughtfully planned by many departments, there are inconsistencies which the school is addressing. The quality of marking varies too much. At best, detailed feedback is provided which gives an accurate level or grade together with clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. In contrast, some marking is infrequent and little comment is made to aid improvement.

Teaching in the sixth form is good and, occasionally, outstanding. Good opportunities are provided for independent learning and discussion which lead to good progress being made. Assessment is used well to track the progress students make against rigorous targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in the main school is good. All requirements of the National Curriculum are met and appropriate amounts of time are allocated to curriculum areas. The school has successfully addressed the issue in the previous report regarding opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum. Constructive links with a local further education college enable pupils to choose from a good range of vocational courses and these meet their needs well.

There is a good range of options in Years 10 and 11. Vocational courses in leisure and tourism and health and social care, in addition to links with local agencies, provide good opportunities for work-related learning. This includes two weeks of work experience for all Year 10 pupils, the Asdan Youth Award and other pre-vocational opportunities. The proportion of pupils taking modern languages is good, with more than 80% of pupils studying at least one modern foreign language. All pupils participate in ICT and religious education and most pursue these to GCSE level.

The curriculum promotes safe and healthy lifestyles through an effective personal, social and health education programme and two hours per week of physical education. There is a good range of enrichment activities which are popular and contribute much to pupils' enjoyment of school life and to their physical well-being.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory overall. There is a good range of opportunities for students to study courses leading to AS and A-levels. However, the range of

vocational courses is limited and does not provide sufficient opportunities for students who are less academically inclined. The school has recognised this and has formed a partnership with a local college of further education so that, in future years, with the introduction of common time-tables, students will be able to choose from a much wider range of academic and vocational courses that better suit their needs and aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for pupils is good. Some elements of the provision are outstanding. All staff have received training in child protection and first aid. Full assessments of risks are in place and the systems for safeguarding pupils are rigorous in meeting government guidelines. The welfare and progress of pupils in the care of the local authority are monitored carefully and very good links are developed with their carers. Transition arrangements into Year 7 are sound. Pupils with learning difficulties and the most vulnerable pupils are catered for particularly well to ensure that targeted support is put in place swiftly. However, pupils with learning difficulties do not make as much progress as expected. The 'drop-in' service provided at lunchtimes, the availability and approachability of the Pupil Support Unit staff, and the willingness of older pupils to offer counselling are amongst the methods through which pupils feel well supported by the school. Careers information and guidance on the suitability of further courses is good and the school has forged effective links with the Connexions partnership in order to facilitate the smooth transition of pupils to post-16 education or training. The parental questionnaires show support for the work of the staff. For example, one parent wrote: 'As parents we feel more than welcome at Rushcliffe and have been treated with helpfulness, courtesy and respect'.

Sixth form students also receive good guidance and support. Tutors and teachers assist individual students willingly and well. Students much appreciate the help they are given.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good both in the main school and in the sixth form. The headteacher is well supported by his senior leadership team and together they ensure a clear focus on strategies to improve the school. Since the last inspection there has been a determined and successful effort to establish a supportive and inclusive climate in the school. The impact of this can be seen in the positive attitudes of pupils of all ages towards the school. Finances are managed skilfully and creatively to allow maximum flexibility so that curriculum areas can extract the best value from their

annual budgets. There is good planning for the maintenance and development of buildings and other resources. The action taken to secure the viability of the sixth form has been effective, as has been the alternative provision for pupils at risk of becoming disaffected. Staff demonstrate a loyalty towards the school and the stability of the staffing in recent years stems in part from this commitment.

There is an established system for monitoring learning and teaching through performance management procedures. In addition, heads of department observe lessons and collaborate with their teams to develop good practice in teaching. The impact has been seen, to some degree, in the recently improved results in Key Stage 3. However, the system is not sufficiently rigorous, especially at middle management level, because of a lack of a consistent approach, and does not allow the senior team to establish a sufficiently accurate understanding of quality, resulting in an over-generous view in some areas.

Governors take their responsibilities as critical friends of the school seriously. They work in partnership with the senior leadership team to create initiatives that reflect their firm commitment to fulfilling the potential of every pupil.

The process of bidding for specialist status has been well managed. Links with the neighbouring college have strengthened, as have links with the family of schools and local businesses, to the benefit of all pupils. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good, and have ensured good improvement since the last inspection.

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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>	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?	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	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

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

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	2	
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

2 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Rushcliffe School, Boundary Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG2 7BW

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. First of all, however, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your friendliness and cooperation during our visit.

The inspection found many things that the school can be pleased about. Standards are high and in many respects have been improving. In general, pupils make the progress that is expected and in Years 7 to 9 pupils have recently been progressing very well. One of the very good features of the school is the support and help that is available. You yourselves in talking to us seemed very aware of the good support available to pupils who need it. You obviously enjoy coming to school, feel safe, and large numbers of you benefit from the wide range of activities available to you. The staff work hard at providing you with help and opportunities and they deserve credit for that. Most of the parents who responded to our questionnaire have a good opinion of your school. Your attendance is good and you behave well in lessons and in the buildings. There is a friendly, positive atmosphere. The curriculum you receive provides you very well with the opportunities you need.

Of course, there are certain things that we think could be better. Not all pupils make the progress they should, and ways need to be found to help all pupils achieve what they are capable of. We think that the teaching at the school is satisfactory, and that a great deal of it is good, but it could be improved further.

The sixth form at Rushcliffe is good. Pupils who go on to the sixth form do very well indeed and the way in which so many sixth formers contribute to the life of the school as a whole school is excellent. We do think that, working with other institutions, the range and flexibility of what is offered to pupils after the age of sixteen could be improved to meet everybody's needs better.

Bob Roberts

Lead Inspector/HMI