



Rodborough Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125260
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293240
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Rake Lane
School category	Community		Milford
Age range of pupils	11–16		Godalming GU8 5BZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01483 428182
Number on roll (school)	908	Fax number	01483 417984
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs T Turpin
		Headteacher	Mr A Smith
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	24–25 January 2007	293240

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Rodborough Technology College is an average sized comprehensive school serving a mainly advantaged area in and around the town of Godalming in Surrey.

The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average. The pupils are predominantly white with very few from ethnic minorities. The school acquired specialist status in technology in 2002 and is part of the Waverley federation of four local schools and a sixth form college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Rodborough Technology College is a satisfactory and improving school with several good features. The pupils enjoy their education and demonstrate this through their positive attitudes to learning and their contribution to the school community. In particular they appreciate the wide variety of activities and extended opportunities offered by the school. One Year 11 pupil commented that and;quot;My five years at Rodborough have been full of opportunities and experiences that have shaped me into the person I am today.and;quot; Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Care and personal support is also good. Pupils value this. However, academic guidance is inconsistent and does not always give individuals enough information about how to improve their work and achieve higher standards.

The standards reached by the end of Year 9 in mathematics and science have risen rapidly and are now well above average. However, the English results have been declining and progress is less good. Overall progress by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 11 most pupils have continued to make satisfactory progress and standards are above the national average.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of all pupils well. Partnership in the Waverley Federation gives particular benefits to pupils especially for the least able and more vulnerable. The specialist status in technology has had a positive impact on provision and the school website has contributed to raising pupils' standards. Pupils were keen to stress how much they enjoy using ICT and having the wider opportunities of learning that arise as a result.

The head and his leadership team have a clear commitment to improvement. School self-evaluation is accurate and the leadership of the school has a clear focus on raising the level of achievement of all pupils. However the effectiveness of middle managers in the use of self-evaluation to bring about improvement is less consistent. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the school knows that it must continue to focus on improving quality across and within departments because not enough teaching is yet good or better. The development of target-setting systems to guide pupils' progress and improve learning is beginning to impact on pupils' standards. However it is still inconsistent and needs further time to embed. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are not always supported as they might be and this is a concern to several parents.

Most parents have a positive view of the school although a few expressed concern over instances of low-level disruption and the extent to which the school seeks parents' views. Governors are supportive and hold the school to account for the standards it achieves. There is a developing sense of vision, purpose and accountability across all staff. The school has a demonstrable capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise levels of achievement

- Continue to arrest the decline in English standards by pupils in Years 7 to 9
- Improve provision and support for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Ensure all middle managers are more effective so that there is consistent and rigorous use of self-evaluation in order to bring about improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils start Year 7 with standards that are generally above average. They make satisfactory progress through the first three years and results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average. This however hides some variation between subjects. In particular results in mathematics and science were well above average with a high percentage of pupils gaining the highest levels in mathematics. However results in English have been declining and pupils make less progress in this subject than they might be expected to. This department is receiving targeted support and training.

GCSE results have been rising over the last 2 years, following a large drop in 2004, and are above national average although the school did not meet its target for pupils achieving 5 or more higher grades. Pupils at the higher end of the ability range however exceeded their targets. Girls' results were higher than boys. Overall progress through Key Stage 4 is satisfactory, although a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, underperformed in 2006.

In lessons observed, most pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities made at least satisfactory progress. The school expects to meet its academic targets this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Their moral social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory. They enjoy learning and most attend school regularly, although a small but significant minority do not attend as well as they should, despite the efforts made by the school to get them to attend regularly. Pupils understand the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and many take advantage of the healthy options offered at lunch time. Pupils behave well and most have responded positively to the rigorous and consistent application of the school's behaviour policy. They value the rewards system and say that it encourages them to do well as they know their achievements will be recognised. The positive postcards home are particularly appreciated.

Pupils are welcoming and considerate and show respect for each other and for the adults they work with. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for and that there are people, including pupil 'peer supporters', they can talk to if they have a problem. They develop many skills which will be useful in the workplace, including leadership, team working and problem solving skills. They make a good contribution to their own

community and to the wider community and many pupils participate in charitable fundraising. Pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility including serving as members of the school council, as prefects or as mentors to other pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and the standard of lessons is improving. A lot of the lessons seen were good and some were very good.

Pupils enjoy explaining and sharing ideas with each other. Their enthusiasm and motivation were evident in a Year 11 drama lesson on staging a theatrical performance where pupils were both engaged and fascinated as they worked in groups. A feature of good and very good lessons is adept and incisive questioning that moves pupils' learning forward. In a Year 7 lesson on the role of the Church in Medieval England pupils were challenged to justify their answers thus broadening their learning about religion. Superficial responses were not accepted. Good lessons are imaginatively planned and the best learning takes place in lessons that challenge pupils of different abilities in different ways. Not enough lessons do this and prior information about pupils' progress is not consistently used to inform teaching. Although there is innovative use of information technology to help shape learning in good lessons this is not consistent. Senior managers know that there are variations in the quality of teaching and learning within and between subjects and have instigated a whole school focus on learning.

Marking is variable in the quality of comments given to help pupils and although most pupils know their target grades or levels many do not know precisely what they need to do to achieve them. Checks that pupils have acted upon advice are not routine.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. Successful cooperation with its partners has enabled the school to widen its range of vocational opportunities. A personalised programme of study for the most vulnerable has ensured that disaffected pupils continue with their learning. The more able pupils receive additional curriculum experiences and opportunities that meet their needs. The social studies programme incorporates citizenship and work related experiences to prepare pupils for the world of work. Pupil literacy, numeracy and information technology skills are well developed. The school's technology college status has helped it to provide additional resources and opportunities to improve the achievement of pupils. One of these notable resources is the school website which is used effectively to facilitate communication and promote learning from home. 'E-learning' days have improved not only pupil awareness but that of the wider community to the on line learning possibilities. Pupils are appreciative of the wide range of opportunities offered

by the programme of extracurricular and enrichment activities. They speak positively about the school production and the and;quot;imaginative opportunities to engage with musicand;quot;. All of this contributes well to the personal development of pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are well cared for and say that a strength of the school is the relationship between them and their teachers. They know where to ask for help and that it is available. The school has rigorous and effective procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe. Child protection procedures are robust and risk assessments are in place.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and developing. There are systems for tracking the progress pupils make but this information is not used consistently to help pupils make rapid progress towards challenging targets. Systems to ensure that teachers are well informed about the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities are underdeveloped, and do not ensure that pupils receive the level of support that they need to enable them to achieve high standards.

The good quality of advice and guidance given to pupils enables them to initially settle well in school and subsequently make informed choices about courses to study and the next steps in their education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The senior leadership of the college is characterised by a shared commitment and drive to raise the achievements of all pupils. There is a very strong partnership between all members of the leadership team. Together they have a clear and honest understanding of what has been achieved in recent years and have led the way to a developing common sense of purpose in the staff on the key priorities for improvement. The School Development Plan lays out the direction for improving pupils' achievement by prioritising the quality of teaching and learning and the development of a whole school pupil target setting and tracking system. As a result lessons are beginning to become more effective. However, more time is needed to embed this completely.

The school is developing the role of heads of departments as 'Leaders of Learning', engendering a culture of reflection on teaching and learning. However there are inconsistencies in some middle managers' understanding of their role in the self-evaluation process particularly with regard to pupil progress. The school is in the process of restructuring and tightening existing line management systems and departmental reviews are being implemented leading to clear and timely actions that should lead to further improvement.

Governors are supportive of the school. They have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in helping the school to improve.

The school has carried a deficit budget in the past but a clear recovery plan is addressing this.

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.

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	2
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	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	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	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	3
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

I am writing on behalf of the other inspectors and myself to thank you for the help you gave us when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say about your school. We hope that you take the time to look at the full report but we thought you would like a summary of our findings.

We think Rodborough is a satisfactory school with areas that are good and the potential to become better.

A strength of the school is the relationships that you have with one another and members of staff. Your attitudes and behaviour both in lessons and around the school are very good. We feel you are well looked after and given good support and guidance in making decisions about the future. The curriculum you are offered is broad and there are a wide range of other opportunities from extra-curricular clubs to exciting trips to extend your learning. You told us that many of you enjoy the responsibilities that you have been given, for example being a member of the school council, a prefect or peer supporter. We were interested to hear that you think the school's technology status has benefited you and you particularly like the learning opportunities offered by your school website.

We saw a lot of good teaching but we found that some was not yet as good as it might be. Your teachers have been working to improve this and we have asked them to continue to do so in order to enable you to make more progress. You can help by asking for clear guidance about how to improve in particular subjects. We have also asked your school to make sure that English examination results at the end of Year 9 are higher and make sure all pupils are given the support and opportunities to succeed.

Your headteacher and teachers are committed to getting things right for you and we are sure you will continue to support them in this. Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes HMI