

Rodillian School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108080
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	301364
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1267
6th form	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr B Sheldrake
Headteacher	Mr J Townsley
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Longthorpe Lane Lofthouse Wakefield West Yorkshire WF3 3PS
Telephone number	01924 823135
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This above average size school has a relatively stable student population. Most students are of White British heritage. Only a very small number are from minority ethnic groups, most of whom speak English fluently. The areas students come from have slightly higher levels of deprivation than is typical. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a little above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is typical. Rodillian has specialist status in the performing arts of dance, drama and music. It is the hub school for the South Leeds Sports Partnerships. It is also the designated high school for South Leeds Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre. Some students from a special school are based on site and have access to mainstream facilities and curriculum. The school holds Investors in People, Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark Awards. The smaller than average sixth form operates in a partnership with other local schools, with a shared curriculum and teaching. The school is due to move into a new building in September 2008.

Leadership and management of the school are currently in a state of transition. The headteacher and deputy headteacher of another South Leeds school are currently running Rodillian as executive and consultant headteachers respectively, sharing their time between both schools. Recruitment of a new, permanent, headteacher is underway. There are a number of staff absences through secondment and illness and several vacancies for teaching staff. The governing body has been restructured and a new chair of governors is in post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' standards, achievement and attendance and in the quality of teaching. The school also requires significant improvement in relation to its sixth form.

There has been serious underperformance at this school for several years, and students' achievement has been poor. Effectiveness since the previous inspection has declined. This situation has now been recognised and is being tackled effectively. The interim headteachers have done much in a short space of time. Decisive action has been taken to address directly specific areas of weakness in staffing, finance and aspects of school organisation. Improved management structures and systems are in place. The executive headteacher is giving a very strong lead to the whole-school community about the urgent need for change. Together with the consultant headteacher, he has been successful in galvanising the school and in securing the support of most staff and students. While much remains to be done, especially in relation to the aspects identified above, the positive impact of work undertaken so far is evident in almost all areas of the school. This demonstrates the capacity for further improvement. There is an awareness that the vacancies for key leaders and teachers need to be filled with high quality staff to build on the progress made so far, and hard work is underway to ensure this happens.

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average and they leave with standards that are much lower than average. They have significantly underachieved for some years with no signs of improvement until very recently. Because of actions now being taken there is evidence that standards are rising, although they are still significantly below average. Achievement is improving, but it is still inadequate overall because earlier underachievement has not been fully compensated for. This is in part because teaching is inadequate. It, too, has been strengthened. Specific weaknesses have been tackled robustly. The impact of training is seen in the improved quality of planning and delivering lessons. Students are responding well to the changes and are enjoying their learning. Some teaching is good or better, especially in the specialist subjects. However, too much is not effective enough, failing to engage or challenge students sufficiently. Staffing vacancies mean there is not a full complement of permanent, effective teachers. Academic guidance has also improved. Until recently neither staff, governors, students or parents had a clear picture of how students were progressing. A good, thorough system for measuring and tracking progress has now been introduced. Although it is in very early stages of implementation, it is proving to be helpful in promoting further improvement. The curriculum is satisfactory, with good plans in place to develop it further.

The school's specialist status work is another area that has had considerable weaknesses but is now improving. Work within the specific specialist subjects has been the strongest aspect of the school. Here, teaching and learning are good and often outstanding, especially in dance and drama. Results in these subjects are amongst the best in the school. Specialist targets at GCSE were met in dance and drama in 2007, but not in music. The specialisms have had little impact on driving up standards across the school, however, although some recent training mounted by specialist subject staff has been well received by others. Extra-curricular provision in the performing arts has been strong and has promoted students' enjoyment. Work in primary

schools has been neglected, with little impact as a result. A new leader of the specialism is proving effective in starting to tackle these weaknesses.

Pastoral care and guidance for students are satisfactory. Students find staff approachable and helpful in dealing with problems. Students with particular vulnerabilities receive good support, and the school utilises well established links with external agencies to help meet their needs. School rules have been clarified and action to improve attendance and behaviour is effective. As a result, both areas have improved, although attendance remains inadequate, especially at Key Stage 4. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students feel increasingly positive about school and safe within it. Relationships are generally harmonious and most students behave appropriately in lessons and around the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The executive headteacher is providing very clear, firm and necessary direction to the school during this difficult period. Together with the effective consultant headteacher, he has harnessed and developed the potential of others, increasing their enthusiasm and effectiveness. All feel more accountable, but supported and enabled to carry out their responsibilities. Most senior leaders, even though several are in acting positions, are doing a good job and having a positive impact. Middle leadership is more mixed, but individuals are receiving good support which is helping them carry out their responsibilities. Governors are aware that they have not been monitoring the school closely enough, allowing a large budget deficit, as well as the other weaknesses, to develop. The new chair and other key colleagues are now working closely with the interim headteachers and others to bring greater rigour to governance and the overall leadership of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 4

The sixth form is inadequate. The school is withdrawing from the partnership arrangements because the needs of Rodillian students are not being met. The standards they reach are below average and they are not achieving well enough. Teaching is satisfactory overall, though some is uninspiring and does not challenge students to think for themselves. The curriculum, however, despite the aim to provide a good choice of courses, is disjointed. Courses are sometimes changed without notice so that students lose the continuity they need. Teachers do not know enough about how their students are doing in other partnership schools. Students are therefore not given sufficient guidance about how to improve and do not feel secure about their progress. Students applying for university places receive good guidance and feel confident that their applications are well prepared and do them justice. Advice for students looking for other pathways, such as further education or employment, is more limited. General pastoral care is sound and students feel they are well known to their tutors. Leadership of the sixth form is currently inadequate. Current plans to run the sixth form entirely through the school, buying in courses for individuals as needed, are well under way. Interest from Year 11 students is considerable and projected numbers show a significant increase on previous years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve students' achievement.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students learn effectively.
- Improve attendance, especially at Key Stage 4.
- Ensure the sixth form is effective so that students reach their full potential.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 4

After several years of being well below the national average, test results at Key Stage 3 and examination results at Key Stage 4 were exceptionally low in 2007. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are lower than they should be at both key stages, especially in the latter two subjects. Students have consistently underachieved. Some individuals have performed better, especially higher attaining pupils and the very small numbers from minority ethnic groups, but most have not done as well as they should. Data from the new assessment systems show signs of improvement, especially in Years 9 and 11 which have been the focus of most attention. However, achievement is not yet strong enough across the school and in all subjects to fully compensate for students' earlier underachievement. In the past targets have been too low and yet have not been met. Specialist targets have been more challenging and some of these have been met. Leaders have ensured that challenging targets are now set across the board.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Most students enjoy school reasonably well. The majority do what teachers ask of them, although not necessarily with much enthusiasm. Behaviour is getting better and for the majority is satisfactory, although a minority of students show poor attitudes to learning and disrupt lessons. There are incidents of bullying and racism, but students say these are dealt with well. Vulnerable students and those from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and receive good support. Students show a satisfactory understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many of them enjoy taking part in arts, sports and other activities to make them fitter and say that they are eating more healthily because of improvements in school meals. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Generous donations to a range of charities indicate their concern for others, and their work in art, music and drama shows a developing cultural awareness. Students enjoy making a contribution to their community with, for instance, Year 10 students acting as mentors for younger students and sixth formers supporting those with learning difficulties. Students are well informed of future career opportunities but their low standards in English and mathematics significantly weaken their preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Overall, although much teaching is satisfactory and some is better, too much is inadequate and does not enable pupils to learn well enough or to make fast enough progress. Methods often do not fully engage or actively involve students, which leads to them being inattentive or too passive in their learning. Not all teachers are successful in managing the poor behaviour of the minority of pupils who disrupt learning. Where teaching is good, as seen in the specialist subjects,

it is characterised by a lively atmosphere, fast pace, interesting activities and careful checking of students' learning as the lesson proceeds. Not all teachers adopt these strategies. Teaching is improving, however, due to training for all teachers and specific support and coaching for individuals. There is now an agreed approach to lesson planning which promotes the incorporation of important features and there is an increasing emphasis on promoting learning. Too frequently however, students are not asked to evaluate their own work or that of their classmates. They do have clear knowledge of the level at which they are working and of their targets but are less clear about what they need to do to improve. The quality of marking is too variable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a satisfactory range of courses and subjects. There is an awareness that more needs to be done to promote students' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. In order to better meet students' full range of needs at Key Stage 4, there are appropriate plans to introduce a range of courses next year, including more vocational options and an alternative curriculum for the most vulnerable students. The personal, social, health and careers curriculum, and the range of extra-curricular activities, are good. Many students enjoy participating in the arts and physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

Pastoral support and guidance is effective throughout the school. Students know that there are individuals they can turn to for assistance when needed. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support from various teams within school. The implementation of the behaviour for learning policy, which is being strictly enforced, is helping improve behaviour. Considerable resources are committed to improving attendance, with some impact but not yet enough. Students are increasingly motivated by a recently improved system of rewards. Appropriate arrangements to ensure child protection, health and safety are in place.

The new system for tracking students' academic progress is providing more accurate and regular information for staff, students and parents. It is being used in a variety of ways to promote further progress but is used more effectively in Years 9 and 11 than across the school as a whole. However, because it is so new, not all staff fully understand how to analyse and use the data and students do not always know how to meet their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 4

The priority of improving the school so that it provides effectively for its students has been established as paramount. The interim headteachers' analysis of the position of the school has been rigorous and perceptive, and monitoring and evaluation, including the quality of teaching, have been significantly strengthened. Accurate information is now shared with staff and governors to help them understand what needs to be done. Leaders' roles and expectations of them have been clarified, and an effective management system established. The executive headteacher has not shied away from the tough action it has been necessary to take in some areas, whilst successfully securing the support of most staff. The local authority is working more closely with the school than previously. The restructured governing body is now working satisfactorily with senior leaders. There is a shared determination to fill the vacancies for key leaders and teachers to speed up the pace of improvement. Key governors are involved in the difficult decisions that are being taken, including those necessary to reduce the large and, until recently, growing budget deficit. This is being done successfully and the budget is now under control. In spite of this, the school gives inadequate value for money because it does not currently provide a satisfactory education and students underachieve in most subjects. Many parents were unhappy with the school. While a small number have found the recent changes hard to accept, most are pleased with the direction the school is now taking.

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	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?	4	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	4
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	4

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	4
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Rodillian School, Wakefield, WF3 3PS

As you know your school was inspected recently and this letter is to inform you about the results of the inspection. However, first I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for talking with us during our visit.

Your school has some positive features. It provides you with effective pastoral care, especially those of you who need special support. You know there are staff you can go to for help when you need it. You enjoy the good range of activities provided for you outside of the classroom. Many of you particularly enjoy the good opportunities for taking part in the performing arts activities resulting from the specialist status. Most of you get on with your teachers and do what they ask you to in lessons. Most of you behave appropriately.

Overall, however, we judge that your school is not effective enough and so we have given it a 'notice to improve'. This is because you are not achieving as well as you should or reaching the standards you are capable of. Although some teaching is satisfactory or better, too much is not helping you learn well enough. Some of you, especially those of you in Years 10 and 11, do not attend regularly enough. The sixth form is not effective enough either and students there are not reaching their full potential. We have asked the school to improve all of these areas.

Your school is going through a period of much change. Even though it is not effective enough, it is starting to improve. The executive headteacher and consultant headteacher know exactly what needs to be done to make the school better for you and, along with other school leaders, is taking the right actions to bring this about. We know they are working hard to fill the vacant teaching and leadership posts to help the school improve further.

You can help the leaders and teachers in your school by attending regularly, behaving well, working hard in lessons and responding to the guidance they give you on how to improve your work.