

Ravens Wood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101669
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307773
Inspection date	14 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Adrian Lyons HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	1432
6th form	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F Akers
Headteacher	Dr G Berwick CBE
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Oakley Road Bromley BR2 8HP
Telephone number	01689 856050
Fax number	01689 850452

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: student achievement and the value added by the school, the personal development of students, the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of leadership and management offered by the school, gathering evidence from: lesson observation, discussion with senior and middle leaders and discussion with groups of students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Ravens Wood is a boy's technology college in Bromley, Kent, with a mixed gender Sixth Form. The majority of the students come from White heritage backgrounds, although there are small numbers from Mixed, Asian, Black, Chinese and other backgrounds. The percentage of students whose first language is not English is low and only four students are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils having learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The current free school meals entitlement is below the national average.

Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds although the surrounding areas are generally more advantaged than average. The school population is relatively settled, with fewer students joining after Year 7 than the national average. The school is comprehensive in a borough that operates a selective system.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ravens Wood is an outstanding school. It is exceptional and innovative in all aspects of its work. The school has not stood still since the last inspection. The overwhelming majority of students and their parents hold it in very high regard. As a parent wrote, echoing the views of many who responded to the inspectors' parental survey, 'Very pleased with Ravens Wood. Lovely school for my son to be at.' By the time they leave the school, students have become extremely confident and well-rounded individuals. Central to the operation of the school is the concept of Ravens Wood Gentlemen and Ladies. This inculcates a mutual respect for all members of the school community. Inspectors found students to be polite, sociable, positive about the school and thoughtful.

Students clearly enjoy their lessons, and are extremely well motivated. Students' mature and thoughtful behaviour is a major contributor to their outstanding progress and creates an extremely positive and hard working culture in the school. Students co-operate very well in lessons and support each other's learning. The mentoring of younger students plays an important role in their outstanding personal development.

Students enter the school with standards in national tests at Key Stage 2 which are a little above the national average. The top end of the ability range is lost to selective schools. Given this ability profile the achievement of students by the end of Year 11 is outstanding. Standards are very high overall and especially so in science with mathematics and English not far behind. There are no differences between the attainment or achievement of different groups. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and are consistently very high.

One of the reasons for the excellent achievement of the vast majority of students is the outstanding quality of teaching. The school is a Leading Edge school which means it is a model of good practice for other schools to follow. Its wide-ranging initiatives include sports leadership programmes for its students, accelerated learning programmes, and concerts for the local community. It has pursued approaches to independent learning, primarily through an educational web-site. The positive feedback the students receive through these activities gives them great encouragement and boosts their confidence. The school has developed a popular and successful computer based, six-weekly, mathematics programme for children from its linked primary schools in Years 4, 5 and 6 and their parents - 'Headstart Foundation Mathematics'. This is a highly interactive programme supported not only by information technology but also by mathematics teachers and sixth form students. These initiatives draw on the strengths of the school's specialist technology status extremely well.

The governing body is very supportive of the headteacher's and leadership team's wider role citing, for example, ideas they have brought back from Sweden, Canada or the headteacher's work as director of the London Leadership Strategy, which are used to the advantage of the school and its students. The same is true of the school's work as a teaching school and of the support it provides to other schools. Both intellectual and financial capital has been earned through the headteacher's outreach work that are ploughed back into improving Ravens Wood.

Fundamental to the success of Ravens Wood is its strategic approach to the quality assurance and continuous improvement of teaching and learning. The approach has been described by external partners as 'logical, systematic and sustainable.' Another external partner told inspectors that what makes the school special is that 'it lives out its strong moral purpose'. A key characteristic of the school is that it is regarded as a learning community for students and staff.

They all have similar targets and everyone is focussed on maximising the learning and achievements of students. The school has purchased a very high level of external validation of its work. Ravens Wood has been awarded Investors in People status and it has Investor in Careers accreditation. Additionally the school receives regular visits from Ofsted accredited inspectors on a consultancy basis and last May each subject area was inspected by one of these external consultants. As a result, leaders know and understand their school very well and self evaluation is very effective.

Faced with the recruitment and retention problems of this expensive area of London, the school trains many of its own new teachers through the Graduate Teacher Programme. The selection process for new teaching staff looks for leadership as well as teaching skills. New teaching staff who exhibit these qualities are given every opportunity to take on new projects and responsibilities. Inspectors met many of the schools recent trainees for whom progress into responsible leadership positions has been rapid. They were very positive about the support and coaching they received as trainee teachers and as school leaders. Leaders are ambitious, imaginative and influential, making their expertise available to the many teachers and leaders from other school with whom they work. The positive influence of the school extends beyond its immediate locality and is instrumental in supporting the work of City Challenge in raising standards across London. This work is now being extended to other English cities and shared through the Learning Schools Alliance based in England and Western Quebec.

Whilst an appropriate emphasis is placed on academic achievement, running alongside this is an extremely broad and popular range of additional opportunities. Exceptionally high numbers of students participate in sport and music. The school is very close to achieving its ambitions that every student should have an entitlement to high quality coaching in either art, drama, sport or music. Whilst arriving at their conclusions, inspectors were extremely impressed by the concert band. Precision and dynamics brought the music alive. Inspectors observed reflective assemblies and tutor time that was used very effectively to teach citizenship.

While the vast majority of parents are very positive about the school, around one in eight parents who returned the questionnaire to inspectors were concerned with behaviour. This view ran contrary to the views expressed by the vast majority of parents and to everything inspectors saw during their visit. Inspectors found behaviour, relationships and attitudes to learning to be outstanding. However, they did raise with leaders an obviously negative perception by some parents.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form where all elements are at least good and most elements are exemplary. Standards are very high. Nationally recognised value added comparisons show that the school consistently enables its students to achieve extremely well in relation to their abilities. The very positive ethos and high quality teaching evident in the main school are equally perceptible in the sixth form. There are excellent relationships between staff and students. The sixth form committee takes on an increasingly effective role in organising events.

There is a small number of girls in the sixth form and they are integrated very well. Indeed the senior leadership of the school and the leadership of the sixth form contain strong female role models. Students praise teachers for the help they get both inside and out of lessons. They feel very well supported in their academic progress.

Students continue to mature and make excellent contributions to the main school and wider community. The school evaluates personal development and well-being in the sixth form to be outstanding and inspectors agree. Inspectors met extremely mature and positive young people. This was exemplified in a tutorial session working on Black history.

The vast majority of sixth formers transfer from the main school. They are so well cared for and guided in the main school that they are keen to carry on in to the sixth form. The success of the main school is so great that a larger proportion of students gain the sixth form entry requirement for advanced level study than might be expected given other measures of ability. The curriculum offered by the sixth form is good in that there is a wide range of GCE subjects from which to choose and the extra opportunities are great. The range of courses on offer does not fully meet the needs and interests of all students who wish to remain in the school after Year 11. As a result some students find they can not keep up with the demands of courses in Year 12 and, after counselling and careers guidance, leave the sixth form. This is largely a consequence of the aged and restricted accommodation. The school has worked hard using external funds to improve facilities for the sixth form but, given the number of young people involved, the accommodation is just not good enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve accommodation so that a curriculum that fully meets the needs and interests of all students who wish to remain at Ravens Wood beyond Year 11, can be offered in the sixth form.

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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
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

21 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ravens Wood School, Bromley, BR2 8HP

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work, your life in school and all you do. We believe your school is an outstanding school and here are the reasons.

The Ravens Wood Gentlemen and Ladies concept encourages respect, politeness and civilised behaviour which prepares you properly to become mature adults.

You achieve extremely well. The results at GCSE at A level compare very favourably with comprehensive schools in parts of the country that do not have grammar schools. Everyone at Ravens Wood has an excellent chance to do well. As in every school, some lessons are better than others, but the overall quality of teaching at Ravens Wood is outstanding. Your school places an unusually high value on training teachers to become even better.

The leaders and managers of your school are held in high regard so that their expertise is shared around the country and abroad. In return they bring new ideas and money into your school to help you.

We observed excellent behaviour around the school and you displayed admirable attitudes to your learning. A minority of your parents believe that behaviour is not good. As a group of students you can work to change that perception.

The range of extra opportunities you have including trips, sports clubs, music, drama and art opportunities is really something special about your school.

Although we have judged your school to be outstanding, that does not mean that it is perfect. To help it become even better we have asked it to improve the accommodation to enable the school to offer some different courses in the sixth form so that more of the many students who want to stay can find something appropriate to their abilities and interests. Of course this requires a lot of money and so may need to be planned over a number of years.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector