

Rednock School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115758
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312058
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1338
6th form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Martin
Headteacher	David Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Rednock Drive Dursley GL11 4BY
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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

Rednock is a large comprehensive school, designated as a specialist science college. There are a relatively low proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Although measures of socio-economic deprivation are low on average, some students do face significant deprivation. Most students are from predominantly White British backgrounds. There are low numbers of students whose first language is not English, and these mainly come from Southern European backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is similar to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Rednock Comprehensive is a good school. Young people who attend the school are well prepared for their future success. This is evident in their good personal development, very positive attitudes, and academic standards that are above the national average. The school is embarking upon great change and development, not the least of which are in relation to improvements to the curriculum for students aged 14–19. There is a clear and refreshing approach to learning, founded upon explicit teaching of learning skills. Students and staff have contributed to a revised and effective behaviour policy.

There is a new tracking and support structure for students which monitors both individual subject progress and the bigger overall journey students are making. Coupled with excellent support for vulnerable learners and thorough, very effective, guidance to all students, this leads to outstanding overall care. The shabby accommodation, although still in use, is soon to be swept aside for a £30m new school building.

There are exciting and challenging times ahead, which the school is well placed to exploit. A strong feature of leadership and management is the extent to which middle leaders have been empowered and encouraged to innovate. This has come about because of the strong team spirit amongst staff at the school, led by a headteacher of conviction and kindness in equal measure. The school's specialist status for science has been effectively used to raise standards in science and mathematics. Additionally, it has catalysed good information and communication technology (ICT) provision for supporting teaching and learning across the school. Many staff have recognised this transformation of provision and are using ICT successfully for teaching. The specialist college work has led to a substantial uptake of students studying science in the sixth form, the support and funding of very good primary school links leading to excellent transition arrangements, and providing access to school resources for the local community.

The school has good capacity to improve. Teaching is consistently good enough to ensure every student, regardless of ability or circumstance, is able to make the expected progress and develop effective personal skills. However, full use of the information about students' ability and their previous knowledge is not always explicitly used in the planning of day-to-day activities. The school has recently given staff and students precise information about the small steps needed towards learning targets, but students do not yet have that information at their fingertips in all cases. The recent good curriculum changes for Key Stage 4, of which the current Year 11 are the first beneficiaries, are a substantial and effective response by the school to an apparent slow-down in the improvement of standards at Key Stage 4 since the previous inspection.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good, the result of an appropriate range of courses and a very positive approach to encouraging students to continue in education either at Rednock or elsewhere. The quality of guidance for students before they enter the sixth form, and when they move on to future employment, education or training, is excellent. Students said this was a major reason for their enjoyment of study; they feel the school proactively encouraged and supported them, so in turn they enthusiastically contribute to school community life. The tracking of students' progress towards academic targets, and personal mentoring to support students, allow them to make good progress academically.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure lesson planning consistently draws upon the prior knowledge and ability of all students
- establish consistent and regular feedback to students so that they know in detail what they need to do to improve their work, week by week.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is satisfactory in the main school, and good in the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry to the school based on Key Stage 2 scores is above average. They make good progress in Key Stage 3 and attain above average standards in national tests overall. English have been variable since the previous inspection and are currently broadly in line with average. Mathematics and science results have improved, meeting specialist targets, and are comfortably higher than average.

Key Stage 4 standards in 2006 were above average on all of the major performance indicators. In almost all cases and subjects, students make at least the expected progress from Year 7 to Year 11, which represents satisfactory achievement overall. There are no differences in achievement between groups of students, although girls gained better standards than the boys. The school responded with specific interventions; in 2007, boys narrowed this attainment gap.

Standards in GCSE examinations in 2007 are similar to 2006. The proportion of students gaining five A* to C including English and mathematics is a particularly strong feature; English, mathematics and science results are all high. However, these results have stayed much the same since the previous inspection whereas nationally, overall standards have risen. The school has already responded to this by making big changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum and reducing the excessive numbers of GCSE examinations taken by many students in the past.

Standards at A level in 2006 were broadly in line with national averages. The majority of students made good progress although for some with lower GCSE entry standards, they were lower than expected. However, the school responded swiftly in 2007 with mentoring and support for such students and, as a result, in 2007 the achievement of all sixth form students in 2007 was good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well being is good, with several outstanding aspects. Students make good progress in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their development. They respond well to the anti-bullying provision, saying that the school's prevention and control of bullying is one of its best aspects. Students develop well socially, as they show in their courteous and respectful relationships between themselves and with adults. They enjoy and value the good community spirit in the school.

Around the school and in almost all lessons students behave well. Students are positive about their involvement in the school's behaviour for learning policy. Attendance is well above average. Support for students at risk of poor attendance is outstandingly effective and, as a result, unauthorised absence is low. Students respond well to the school's provision for internal

exclusion and to the arrangements for re-entry after exclusion. Attitudes to learning are positive, with students attentive to the teacher and actively involved in the completion of tasks.

Students show an excellent spirit of enjoyment in their education. Students cooperate well in pairs, groups and whole-class discussions. Parents are rightly confident that the school is a good place for their children to be. The students have responded well to the school's promotion of healthy living. They enjoy their lessons in Life Skills and value them as a good feature. Students know that they have an effective role in the life of the school through its various student councils. The contribution of all students to the life of the school as a community is outstanding. For example, they played a vital role in improving the quality of lunchtime food, and as a result, students now purchase and enjoy a wide range of healthy options, as befits its 'Healthy Schools' status.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good in all parts of the school, including the sixth form. Consistently good teacher-student working relationships result in a safe classroom ethos in which students freely ask questions and discuss ideas. Subject expertise is also very good, so that students experience the know-how and enthusiasm of talented practitioners. These characteristics are bringing about good student attitudes to learning and good personal development.

Students' achievement at Key Stage 4 has been satisfactory rather than good. However, inspection evidence and the school's own accurate monitoring show no inadequate elements in current teaching quality. Students made the best progress when teaching was imaginative, well planned and challenged their preconceived ideas. For example in an English lesson, Year 12 students were observed analysing a text for the rest of the group who then had to question the basis for this analysis. Consequent discussion ensued and the learning and progress in that group was outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the pace was brisk, challenging questions were specifically targeted to particular students and students were able to use higher-level learning skills such as evaluating and anticipating.

Teaching assistants are well informed and are often instrumental in ensuring that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Lessons where tasks were matched to students' abilities and prior knowledge resulted in good progress. Where this matching was absent, progress was generally satisfactory.

Assessment procedures are now well established and students' attainment data is used effectively to set targets and review progress at regular intervals. The quality of feedback to students in day-to-day marking varies between excellent and satisfactory. Most students know their target grades, and the majority could explain how to reach them, but they currently do not keep this good guidance with them for quick reference, either in their exercise books or planners, for all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Following the appointment of the headteacher three years ago, the school evaluated possible causes of relatively routine progress of students at Key Stage 4 when compared with good Key Stage 3 achievement. As a result, it redesigned the curriculum and timetable to meet the needs of older students better, and changed the provision for them in 2006. The current curriculum offers an innovative range of flexible academic and vocational pathways, fosters skills-based learning and prepares students well for their future economic well-being. The curriculum provides good opportunities for learners with difficulties and/or disabilities to progress and increase in self-esteem, for example ASDAN and the National Open College certificate course.

Successful curriculum programmes are rolled-over to provide continuity at sixth form level. The sixth form curriculum overall is good and expanding. The specialist science college status is a strength of the school, demonstrated in real enthusiasm for science and mathematics and impressive take-up of sciences at all levels, including transition to further education.

The school provides particularly good outreach support to local primary schools and the community impact of specialist status is strong, for example as 'Testbed Learning' partners and the 'Discover' cross-curricular Saturday for parents and students. Specialist status has further enriched the curriculum with the introduction of new subjects such as astronomy, geology and whole-school learning skills initiatives. Strong partnerships with local businesses and institutions support both the specialist status and enterprise initiatives.

An extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities and clubs includes sports, drama, music and subject clubs. These have a high take-up rate and are much appreciated by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school takes excellent care of its students, who know and appreciate that there are a range of support systems in place if they have any academic or personal problems. Links with external agencies are very constructive and multi-agency meetings bring about positive results for students at risk. Students consistently say that there is always someone to talk to in school if they have a problem and they value the fact that the staff treat them as individuals. There are sound systems in place to assess how well students are progressing. The majority of students are aware of what they should do to meet their academic targets.

Robust procedures safeguard learners; recruitment strategies are secure, risk assessments are thorough and all staff are trained in child protection procedures. Staff know their students well and are sensitive to their needs. Vulnerable students and those returning to school after absence, for example after bereavement, are well supported through the learning support department and the learning centre.

Students themselves recognise the value of the learning centre and its role in improving behaviour. The process of baseline assessment on transfer to the school ensures that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those children who are looked after are well supported by the whole school community and consequently make at least satisfactory progress. Guidance about future careers is efficiently shared between the school and the Connexions

service. It is comprehensive and valued by the students. A large proportion of Year 11 students stay on to post-16 education and they say that this is largely due to the excellent guidance they receive in school about their future life. This high quality of support is matched in Year 13.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good at all levels in the school. They are characterised by an open and enthusiastic senior leadership team, ably led by a headteacher who commands respect and loyalty from staff and students. This has created a culture of innovation and openness, resulting in good delegation of accountability to middle managers. The school has a strong student tracking system that permits both year managers and department teaching and learning coordinators to intervene for students who appear to be slipping behind. Monitoring and evaluation is well established, with middle managers part of the lesson observation process.

Accommodation remains shabby, although many rooms have good displays of students' work; in science corridors, for example, there are systematic and informative displays on topical matters. This is not consistently apparent everywhere in the school, particularly in rooms or corridors with no 'ownership' by a teacher, tutor or subject. The school is managing to maintain clean facilities despite the difficulties presented by the site.

Governors are kept well informed through link governors, annual departmental and subject reviews, and meetings with heads of department. Students are invited to governor meetings, and contribute to staff recruitment processes. Finance management is secure, with good examples of using financial comparisons with other schools to secure best value. The school is inclusive, and works hard and successfully to ensure learners of all abilities and backgrounds are able to access a good education, for example in the approach taken to ensure as many students as possible benefit from sixth form education.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
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

Thank you for your positive welcome and enthusiastic, honest conversations we had during our inspection of your school. You played a key role in confirming the excellent care, guidance and support that the school provides. Your good manners, good behaviour and enjoyment of learning are a testament to the good personal development you are making.

Rednock Comprehensive is a good school. This is because your teachers, and support staff, are good at their job and committed to ensuring you do as well as you should. This is clear for your academic progress and in the equally important personal attributes that you are developing. You are well taught by skilled subject experts. The school leaders, from your headteacher through to heads of department and year teams, are willing to explore better ways of teaching and more interesting subject options. They monitor your progress carefully to ensure you will all make the academic progress expected of you.

We appreciate that the present school buildings are quite shabby in places, but also that a new one is on its way. In the meantime, we hope you continue to be careful as you move around the site, helping teachers to 'paper over' some of the tatty walls with fresh displays of your own work. Your involvement through the school council in helping to direct change will be vital to maintain, so that students who inherit the new site can benefit from your own advice and contributions.

We think that to become even better, the school should be more consistent in planning lesson tasks that match your abilities better, and also take more account of what you can do already. Most of you know your academic targets in terms of final grades, but there is room for you to have clearer guidance on the small next steps you could make, lesson-by-lesson, to reach those targets.