

Ringwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116496
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312340
Inspection date	11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Evans

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	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1592
Sixth form	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon John Turpin
Headteacher	Miss Chris Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Parsonage Barn Lane Ringwood BH24 1SE
Telephone number	01425 475000
Fax number	01425 473063

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: reasons for high achievement patterns and well above average standards in the main school and in the sixth form, the impact of the school's specialist status on learning and on the wider community and how well the curriculum serves the needs of all students.

Evidence was gathered from performance data, external monitoring reports, observations of teaching and scrutiny of the work produced by students. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with students, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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

Ringwood is a fully subscribed school with a growing sixth form population. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. The great majority of students are White British or of other White ethnicity. The proportion of those students identified as having either specific learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is below average, as also is the proportion of students with statements of special educational need. The school has had specialist Language College status since 2003 and received the full International School Award and the European Award for Languages in 2006. It has Investor in People status as well as two Eco-Schools Green Flags, Artsmark, Sportsmark, Activemark and Healthy School Awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ringwood is an outstanding school. Standards have been consistently well above average over the past three years. Students with specific learning difficulties and those with behavioural or emotional difficulties receive support appropriate to their needs. Most students enter with above average literacy and numeracy skills and make excellent progress, both in their studies and in their personal development. A parent commented that the school seems to bring out the best in the individual child. 'My child received an A* GCSE in a modern foreign language in Year 7 and the school has placed her in an AS language group this year - fantastic!'

One reason behind the students' rate of achievement and standards is the high level of expectation and careful monitoring by senior leaders. Achievement in English dipped significantly at GCSE level in 2007. The senior leadership group and English teachers subsequently focused more sharply on ensuring that borderline students were entered at the right levels for their GCSE examination and that students knew their assessment objectives and the next step in their learning. Consequently, GCSE English results recovered significantly in 2008. The proportion of students achieving the higher grades in both English and mathematics at GCSE was very significantly above the national average. Current English assessments show that achievement now matches the school's very high expectations and is close to the very high standards in mathematics and science. Language results are equally well above average and Year 7 students show the benefits arising from the partnership that the school provides as a Language College for primary schools.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is rigorous and underpins the continuing drive towards higher achievement. It is linked suitably to staff development. It also successfully enables the sharing of best practice especially by language staff and teachers adopting a wider range of learning styles in the classroom. As a result, although there is some variation in the quality, teaching and learning are outstanding overall throughout the school. The sheer breadth and high levels of participation by students in enrichment clubs and activities has an additional and very positive impact on their learning and achievement in the classroom.

An excellent range of enterprise activities help students' economic understanding, and prepare them extremely well for the adult world beyond. The school's language specialism has enhanced its impact on the wider community. Students undertake enterprise activities which demonstrate the economic impact of business within the European and global marketplaces. For example, the local Rotary Club sponsored a day where Year 9 students, helped by fifteen business advisers, had to design a jeans brand. However, the school recognizes the need to introduce more breadth to the vocational curriculum and has begun to implement strategies to develop a broader range of courses. It has successfully bid for finances for a much needed building programme which will provide accommodation for additional applied learning courses, to include Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and new Diploma courses.

The very high levels of care and support contribute significantly to students' outstanding personal development and to high achievement patterns. Behaviour is excellent. Students thoroughly enjoy school and feel very safe and secure. Attendance is above average and improving further since the introduction of electronic registration. Relationships are outstanding. The school ethos creates a very positive learning environment and clearly reflects the school's mission of 'Learn all you can - Achieve as much as you can - Help others whenever you can'.

The personal, health, social education and life skills programmes are very effective. Students have an excellent understanding of healthy-living issues.

The students run a very influential Student Voice Association with ten 'Voice' representatives from each tutor group in all years covering learning and teaching, student health and welfare, environmental issues and citizenship/political voice. Student representatives sit on the Town Council committees. They successfully persuaded the Town Council to support a number of environmental projects. For example, the artistic refurbishment of the town's underpass tunnel by art students. Many excel at sports, music, drama and dance. A Year 11 parent commented that 'Ringwood School shines as a beacon; there are so many opportunities for students to be involved in positive and worthwhile pursuits both during and after school'.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school has been successful over a long period because of the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher and the superb support she is given in improving provision by the strong teamwork of teaching and support staff, administrative personnel and governors. Students have confidence that their views are important - a theme that was taken up by a Year 10 student who earlier in the year won a sponsored exchange week to Canada. She wrote, 'I noticed that their schools are student driven, it is all about the students, more than the teachers - I hope to incorporate their ways into our school'. Staff are not complacent and are continually adjusting their practice to meet the needs of students and to help them do their best. The school is exceptionally well placed to maintain its high quality education and improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form students are very impressively mature and provide excellent role models for younger students. Standards are consistently and exceptionally high and achievement is outstanding. For instance, over half the students attain a grade A or B at GCE A-level. As a result of the school's specialist status, there has been a considerable increase in the number of students following language courses. The quality of teaching and learning across subjects is outstanding and successfully encourages students to become independent learners. Other aspects of personal development are not neglected in the relentless pursuit of academic excellence. Many students are highly talented leaders and have won recognition across a range of national competitions. Around 40 students join the sixth form each year from other schools. A unique feature of the school is the large number of international students who opt to come to the school for their A-level studies from all parts of the globe including Kazakhstan, Latvia, China and Japan. They are not only successful academically but have a significant beneficial influence on the rest of the school through their commitment and sharing of their cultures. Leadership and management by the senior directors is outstanding and a powerful factor in the increasing success and continued growth of the sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend and build on current initiatives to develop a wider range of vocational courses in the main school and in the sixth form.

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/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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 learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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 eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

24 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Ringwood School, Ringwood, BH24 1SE

Thank you for your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. You told us you are proud of your school and we can see why. Students in Years 7 to 13 were very enthusiastic and said how much they enjoy school. We were very impressed with the Student Voice students we met and the very positive contributions you are all making to enhance the school learning environment.

We agree with you that Ringwood is an outstanding school. These are the things we liked most.

- You attain excellent standards and make outstanding progress.
- The quality of teaching is high and staff have your best interests at heart.
- The school's specialist Language College adds a very valuable dimension to the curriculum and the wider community.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and her team.
- The excellent work of the school attracts students from all over the world into the sixth form.
- Senior students provide excellent role models for the rest of the school especially in their leadership through Eco groups and in local and global community initiatives.

The school is not complacent and is always striving to improve further. For example, we are asking the headteacher and staff to extend and build on the range of vocational courses on offer in the school curriculum. They will need your support so that the new courses can best meet your needs.

I wish you continuing success in the future. It was a privilege to come to your school and meet you.

Yours sincerely

Brian Evans

Lead Inspector