

Rushey Mead School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120282
Local Authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	313575
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Derrick Baughan HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1352
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann White
Headteacher	Carolyn Robson
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Melton Road Leicester LE4 7PA
Telephone number	01162 663730
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Rushey Mead School is a larger-than-average secondary school on the outskirts of Leicester. In 2005, the school was awarded sports and science specialist college status. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is significantly higher than average, with a large majority from an Indian heritage, as is that of students for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average but the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Rushey Mead is an outstanding school, of which the students are rightly proud. They make outstanding progress during their time there. As one parent put it, 'My daughter is really enjoying going to school. She is making great progress and I am very happy with her work.' Attainment on entry is slightly below the national average and by the end of Key Stage 4 it is well above. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at A* to C is on a rising trend, as is the proportion of those achieving the highest grades. The school makes very good use of data and target-setting to monitor and drive up achievement and because of this it has rightly identified those few subjects where students achieve less well. Plans to improve this are clear and detailed although are not yet fully implemented.

Sports and science specialist college status has had a positive impact on provision and outcomes for all students. Their awareness of healthy living is exemplary, with a wide range of healthy eating options available at lunchtime. Most students participate in a range of sporting activities. Standards in science have improved and are high; also, those in mathematics have improved from below the national average to above in 2007. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The behaviour of most pupils is exemplary. Attendance is well above the national average and improving.

The school's outstanding curriculum meets the academic aspirations and personal development needs of all students exceptionally well. As well as providing a wide range of core and additional GCSE subjects, the curriculum has an extremely well-developed range of non-academic options. Students contribute well in lessons and outstanding teaching and learning mean that they make the most of the learning opportunities available. All of this is underpinned by an outstanding system for care and guidance, which ensures students receive the most appropriate academic and personal support. The school has a very strong focus on students being involved in the community, both locally and abroad. The whole school is rightly proud of their work to establish a school, also named Rushey Mead, in India. The totality of the school's provision results in an excellent holistic development programme for students, who are nurtured and encouraged to fulfil their potential. They are extremely well equipped for the next stage of their education and later life.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has successfully established a strong ethos of leadership throughout the school. Extremely good development plans and activities support this well. Senior and middle managers set clear direction, with a particularly strong focus on continuous improvement. Excellent target-setting at all levels contributes to raising achievement and standards. Improvement is informed by rigorous self-evaluation. Although its accommodation presents a challenge to good quality provision, the school makes excellent use of its resources to ensure that it provides outstanding value for money. Governors hold the school to account well and are fully involved in school activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Further improve standards in the few subjects that the school identifies as performing less well by sharing more widely the exceptional teaching practice within the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding. When students start in Year 7, the standard of their work is slightly below national figures. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above the national average. GCSE results are on a rising trend, and in 2007, 70% of students achieved five or more GCSEs at A* to C, with a rising proportion of higher grades. Achievement of A* to C is well above the national average in most subjects. Students' progress, including that of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is outstanding both in lessons and over time.

The use of data to identify and improve performance is rigorous and supported well by detailed target-setting at all levels and for various aspects of students' performance. The school has used this well to identify those few subjects where performance is not so good and has implemented a range of improvement measures. The specialist sports and science college status has had a positive impact on achievement and standards. Last year 66% of all Year 11 students achieved the Junior Sports Leader award and the school is on target for a significantly higher achievement this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school rightly judges personal development and well-being as outstanding. Spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is particularly strong and has had a good impact on students. They respect one another and their teachers, thoroughly enjoy lessons and are eager to learn. All newcomers from other schools or from abroad are swiftly helped to integrate well. The great majority of students show exemplary behaviour in lessons and behave well around the school; however, a few students do not always behave as well as they should. Students' overall attendance and punctuality are excellent. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school, which they feel is a safe, caring and happy community. A very large proportion join school clubs and enjoy the wide range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities. The students respond very positively to the school's thorough and active promotion of safe and healthy lifestyle. They have particularly benefited from the sports specialism, which makes an outstanding contribution to the health, enjoyment and personal development of all, not just those with sporting talent. Students take good advantage of the wide range of healthy eating options at lunchtime and have an extremely high awareness of, and practise, safe and healthy lifestyles.

Students benefit significantly by taking excellent advantage of the many opportunities to make positive contributions to the school and wider community. In Year 10, all students are involved in well-organised community work and work experience. The school council is effective and students are now involved in innovative 'learning walks'. Outstanding links with external organizations both in the city and abroad foster a wide view of their role in the world and an excitement and optimism about their future. One boy said he was hoping to go to visit Nigeria to follow up the school's efforts to help others there. Students were thrilled to receive over 500 letters from pen pals in China. The great majority of students are mature for their age, confident, articulate and happy. Almost all school leavers, 99% in 2007, go on to further education, training or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

A very high proportion of lessons are good or outstanding. Students enjoy their lessons because teachers challenge and stimulate them to do their very best and make accelerated progress. Lessons are positive learning environments, with students confidently participating in both class and group activities, reflecting the good quality of relationships between staff and students. The probing use of questions draws out well-reasoned explanations and encourages debate. For example, in an outstanding religious education lesson, students enthusiastically and articulately discussed arguments for the existence of God, using complex vocabulary.

In the very best lessons, the pace is fast and teachers have the highest expectations of their pupils, while providing excellent support to ensure that no-one is left behind. A wide range of interesting techniques using ICT and innovative resources is used very well and strongly supports learning. Learning objectives are precise and used effectively to guide and review learning. Assessment strongly supports learning. Teachers use it adeptly to identify areas of weakness and introduce initiatives such as boy-friendly learning strategies to address them. The school puts a strong emphasis on inclusive practice and personalised learning is developing well at a school and classroom level. Marking in most departments is of a high standard; however, in a few cases it is not used so effectively to guide students' improvement. Extremely good reference is made to standards and targets are set and monitored effectively so students feel confident about what they have to do to improve and are motivated to do it. The tracking and monitoring of students' progress are excellent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that meets the needs and interests of all students. A wide range of academic subjects and vocational courses, such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications, offers students many opportunities to excel in the subjects of their choice and to pursue the future career that they feel appropriate for them. Highly effective links with local FE colleges support very good work experiences. One of the strengths is the innovative way the school engages students with learning difficulties and those who are at the early stages of learning English in their learning, gaining in confidence and life skills. For example, courses like Personal Development Progression and Tailored Learning Curriculum have enabled students to develop very positive attitudes to learning and raise attendance and achievement.

Specialist school status allows all students in Years 10 and 11 to study the new science course, with the opportunity to take applied or additional science in Year 11 as well as diverse sporting activities. All students follow a GCSE course in a modern foreign language or in a first language such as Gujarati, Portuguese or Dutch. The school offers an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. These include many opportunities for sporting and artistic activities and clubs, which are very popular with students. The large number of trips to places of interest locally and abroad contributes very well to students' enjoyment in learning and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school's pastoral care system is excellent. Every young person is treated as an individual and in this school every child does matter. The school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning and students know they have a trusted adult to turn to should they feel vulnerable. Child protection and health and safety procedures are rigorously adhered to and understood by staff. They know the students' personal circumstances and their difficulties very well.

The support for students is excellent and much valued and appreciated by them and their parents. Looked-after children and vulnerable students are well provided for and feel very well supported. They make progress at the same rate as other students. An innovative programme of personalised learning initiatives particularly helps those students who are in danger of becoming disengaged from learning. Robust strategies are in place to improve the behaviour of a small minority of students. A wide range of external services provides guidance and careers education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher's excellent leadership has succeeded in establishing a school where everyone's leadership potential is recognised and opportunities abound for both students and staff to develop themselves. The whole school shares the common aims of raising standards and improving achievement. Promoting equality of opportunity and combating discrimination are central to the school's ethos and enable all students to succeed in this very caring environment. The school's re-structuring of senior leadership and distribution of leadership across the school has resulted in very effective teams. This structure is instrumental in ensuring that the positive impact of the school's specialist status is felt in all curriculum areas.

Leaders' expectations of what can be achieved are very high. As a result, whole-school targets for students' progress are translated well into ambitious yet realistic targets for individual pupils. The use of data has been substantially reviewed and is now outstanding. It is exceptionally well prepared, and used by all staff to ensure that accurate analysis and monitoring of progress towards targets is happening at all levels.

The school's planning is very well focused and built on an excellent understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. Rigorous self-evaluation is very well informed by regular monitoring of the school's work. The school's plans to extend the use of the views of parents and pupils will further strengthen this process. This strength and the outstanding rate of improvement since the previous inspection indicate that the school's capacity to maintain its excellent performance and make further improvement is outstanding. Governors have a good understanding of the school's context, strengths and areas for development. They work closely with senior leadership and contribute significantly to school improvement.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	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	1

The quality of provision

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

8 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Rushey Mead School, Leicester, LE4 7PA

Thank you all for your warm welcome and help during our inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to meet you all and your contribution was important in helping us come to our judgements.

You are rightly proud of your school, which is outstanding and prepares you extremely well for your future education, employment and later life. You make outstanding progress and the results of those at the end of their time in the school are well above the national average. The outstanding quality of the teaching helps you learn and you play your part in that really well. You are eager to contribute and work well with the teachers. The behaviour of most of you is exemplary, especially in lessons, and you clearly enjoy learning. Your punctuality and attendance are excellent, although we agree with the school staff who want to improve these even more.

It is not only in academic subjects that you do well. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for those of you who prefer practical and vocational subjects. The specialist sports and science college status has contributed significantly to all of the above. Well done to the basketball team, who won so convincingly on the Wednesday we were there. We note the improvement in science and mathematics. We were pleased with the number of you who achieved junior sports leaders awards. Physical activity and healthy living pervade all that you do. You told us that you really like the range of activities and healthy eating choices which contribute well to your healthy living. We were also impressed with your work in the community both locally and abroad. We enjoyed the display of Latin American art and food.

We did agree with Mrs Robson that you could do even better in a few subjects and have asked that she ensures that the teachers share, across the whole school, the exceptional practice that we saw.

Yours faithfully Derrick S Baughan HMI