

Redden Court School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102338
Local Authority	Havering
Inspection number	323623
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
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	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	630
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Victor Bensilum
Headteacher	Mr Paul Ward
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
School address	Cotswold Road Harold Wood Romford RM3 0TS
Telephone number	01708 342 293
Fax number	01708 386 550

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Redden Court School is smaller than average. It was designated a mathematics and computing specialist college in 2006. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds; there are a small number from African heritage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is a little higher than found nationally. Although the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is only slightly higher than the national average, the number with a statement of educational need is very high, being nearly three times the national average. The school has a speech and language resource base.

During the autumn term 2008, an acting headteacher led the school following the summer retirement of the previous headteacher. The current headteacher took up post on 1 January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

The school provides a satisfactory and improving standard of education. A feature of the school is that students' personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding aspects. The whole-school Rainbow Nation project's contribution to the community is outstanding. Pastoral care for students is very strong. Inspectors found a calm and happy school which students clearly enjoy attending, and spoke to mature and thoughtful students who get on well together. Issues identified in the last inspection have largely been tackled. However, until quite recently the school has failed to keep up with the national practice of increased accountability and rigour in raising expectations and aspirations of staff and students. Many initiatives have been implemented too recently to see their impact. Nevertheless, due to improvements this year in students' achievement and standards and in teaching and learning, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They view the school as a friendly and happy place, although some rightly expressed concern over a lack of inspiration for students to achieve their potential and gain high results. Representatives of the staff, senior leaders, governors and local authority independently commented that the notice to improve given by the last inspection was the 'best thing to have happened to the school'.

Following several years of underachievement, students' achievement is now satisfactory and the standards they attain are broadly average. Teaching has improved and, in relation to their starting points, students make sound progress. Their good behaviour and attitudes also contribute well to their achievement.

The quality of teaching has improved but remains satisfactory overall. Externally moderated observation of teaching and learning provides evidence that inadequate teaching has been eliminated and that a large majority of lessons are good. However, there remains inconsistency in the rate of students' learning. A further contribution to students' rising achievement is the improving curriculum. The introduction of vocational and applied courses in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education has helped boost results. However, innovation to meet the needs and interests of students has been piecemeal. The school has yet to seize the flexibility offered by the new Key Stage 3 curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum remains satisfactory.

Students' care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. Systems to monitor students' achievement have continued to develop and improve. Classroom teachers and leaders at all levels have improved information to identify underachieving students. This triggers intervention.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. A strength of the school is the weekly line management meetings between senior and middle leaders. The local authority and national strategies team have worked with the school to support its improvement. Advisors have worked in partnership with the school to carry out thorough reviews of several departments. Monitoring boards involving senior leaders, governors and local authority staff meet regularly to monitor and review progress. As a result, governors are now fully involved in the strategic management of the school.

Specialist status has clearly been beneficial. Participation in both mathematics and information and communication technology has increased through curriculum changes. These provide more time for both subjects in Years 10 and 11 and additional courses, for example GCSE statistics. The specialism has initiated intervention strategies for students in danger of underachievement through, for example, the adult literacy and numeracy qualification and Business and Technology Education Council work skills.

The school works closely with feeder primary schools to develop mathematics and ICT, which helps the smooth transfer of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the aspirations of students and teachers to improve the achievements and standards of students.
- Build on existing good practice, ensuring that all pupils receive consistently good teaching, so they achieve their full potential and reach higher standards.
- Improve the quality of leadership at all levels, so that leaders can more effectively monitor the quality of provision and the impact of new assessment processes on students' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, students enter the school with standards that are a little below average and leave with standards that are now broadly average, representing satisfactory achievement. Over the last three years the proportion of students gaining five GCSE passes at grades A* to C has risen from 41% to 50%, which, while remaining below average, is closing the gap. Attainment in English and mathematics is less strong. A legacy of underachievement has been transformed in science, but recent improvements in provision came too late to have a significant impact on 2008 English results. However, results from November 2008 English GCSE examinations that arrived during the inspection give solid evidence of satisfactory achievement.

Student progress over the last three years has been average. The overall progress data has been pulled down by that for English. With the evident improvements in that subject and improved teaching and learning throughout the school, student progress is improving. Specialist status targets for both whole-school and specialist subjects were achieved in both 2007 and 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students have a positive attitude to learning. The good relationships that exist improve their confidence and self-esteem and help them to achieve. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous to adults, are polite and work well in pairs and groups. Students behave safely in lessons and are very aware of potential hazards that could occur. Students say that bullying is rare and occasional incidents are dealt with swiftly. The student voice has strengthened and they feel confident to raise matters of concern. Year 11 students respond well when younger students treat them as role models by asking them for help and support. The school councillors take their duties seriously. They are pleased that they are able

to offer suggestions about improving the environment of the school and feel that their issues are taken seriously, and acted upon.

Most students have a clear understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Many take part in the many physical activities that the school offers and appreciate the need for a balanced diet. However, there are still some students who need to take more responsibility for adopting a healthy lifestyle. Students are developing an excellent understanding of living in a multicultural society through initiatives such as the Rainbow Nation programme. As a result students have an outstanding appreciation of their own and other cultures and how to contribute to the wider community outside the school.

Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being through structured work-related learning, financial and economic understanding and their improving skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Relationships between teachers and students are a strength and students are positive in their attitudes. They enjoy lessons and behave well. This helps them to engage in learning and work with interest and enthusiasm.

Teachers increasingly share good practice and review their own teaching. However, there is inconsistency across the school and consequently some lessons do not focus fully on students' learning. Too often tasks and activities provide insufficient challenge to enable all students to achieve their best and become independent learners. Lessons are well organised and managed. Teachers share clear objectives and success criteria with their students and plan opportunities to evaluate their work and that of their classmates. The school has developed a new structure of 'pupil-friendly assessment' and students are encouraged to recognise what they need to do to reach higher grades. However, they do not always use these criteria when working independently, limiting progress. In written work marking does not always enable students to know what they can do and how they can improve.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan a variety of activities, but there is not always a strong enough focus on learning. For example, teachers do not always use questioning to challenge students' thinking, do not encourage active learning, nor do they develop students' confidence to express ideas and opinions. This inhibits the progress of more able learners.

The learning support staff work effectively with students with special needs, both with targeted support in lessons and through withdrawal activities, so that they achieve at a similar rate to other students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has a satisfactory impact on students' achievement, and has improved since the previous inspection. The school has responded to the issues at the last inspection by increasing the proportion of English and mathematics in the curriculum. Departments now plan regularly throughout the school for the development of literacy in all subjects, and of numeracy in several. Provision for ICT is strong. The school has recently introduced provision of some courses that meet the needs and interests of an increasing range of learners in Years 10 and

11, through the development of vocational courses both in school and in collaboration with the local college. However, there is not yet a clear strategy for meeting the needs and interests of all students. New approaches to the National Curriculum for Years 7 to 9 are not evident.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements in full. There is a wide range of opportunities for enrichment in sport, drama, dance and music where all Year 7 pupils are offered instrumental tuition at no cost.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students speak warmly about the atmosphere of mutual respect between themselves and their teachers. They are confident that there is always someone to turn to with any concerns. Students feel secure and well protected by the school's safety procedures and rightly believe that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. All procedures for safeguarding young people are in place. The school has good systems to manage students' transfer from the feeder schools. These ensure that they settle quickly, because any concerns and issues are addressed as soon as they join Reddon Court. Support for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective and means that they make progress at the same rate as other students. Good links with a range of external organisations also support students' welfare.

Students are aware of their long-term target grades. Data on student performance is used to identify underperformance, leading to positive intervention by subject teachers. Marking and assessment are much improved and students interviewed were very positive about the way their work was marked and the feedback for improvement they received. However, inspectors found too much variability in the frequency and quality of marking, with the result that not all students know what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

During the last year the senior leadership team has worked hard to maintain the day-to-day operation of the school and drive improvement. High-quality care has been combined with much-improved use of data to monitor and support students. Middle leaders commented that the data has existed for a long time, but it is only recently they have known what to do with it. As a result middle leaders are being held more accountable by senior leaders and classroom teachers are more accountable to heads of department. However, while processes and procedures are now in place, it is too soon to see their impact on raising standards and their implementation across the school is inconsistent, for example the quality and frequency of marking. There is evidence that managers have been effective in raising standards, but inspectors found that in some areas expectations of what could be done are too low, resulting in insufficient challenge.

The school has a headteacher who brings school improvement experience together with a clear vision focused on raising aspirations and achievement. He has only been in post for one week. Good training has taken place to raise the quality of teaching, but the reliability and robustness of teaching observations across the school proved variable. In other areas of the school's operation, managers lack sufficient information to be well enough informed about the quality of provision. Governors ask hard questions of the school. They took the lead with the local authority and students in the appointment of the new headteacher.

There are good links with outside organisations to support and promote community cohesion. The school's mathematics and computing status is having a positive impact on many aspects of its work.

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
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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

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

26 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Redden Court School, Romford, RM3 0TS

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

We believe your school is satisfactory. Your personal development and well-being are good with some outstanding aspects.

- Your school is a happy, friendly community. You told us this and it is obvious to anyone who visits.
- The Rainbow Nation project is excellent at encouraging you as a student body to make an extremely positive contribution to the community. As a result you are prepared very well to be good citizens of this country and the world.
- Many of your lessons are good. Lessons are helped to be good by your very good behaviour and your keenness to be involved. You told us that there had been a lot of improvement in teaching over the last year.
- We know that you are cared for extremely well. You behave in a very sensible and mature way around the school and in lessons.
- The vast majority of you and your parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. Many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities.
- Becoming a mathematics and computing college has improved your resources and has led to a wider range of subjects available in Years 10 and 11.

We have asked your school to do the following things to bring about improvement:

- encourage your teachers to expect even higher standards from you so that you all achieve your full potential
- ensure that good-quality lessons that take place in many areas of the school are normal practice throughout the school
- improve the leadership and management of the school to ensure that what is supposed to be happening always happens.

We wish you all well for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Adrian Lyons

Her Majesty's Inspector