

# Ranelagh Church of England School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110082
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bracknell Forest
<b>Inspection number</b>	325096
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Kennedy HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	916
Sixth form	194
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr C Barrows
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs K M Winrow
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Ranelagh Drive Bracknell RG12 9DA
<b>Telephone number</b>	01344 421233
<b>Fax number</b>	01344 301811

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: progress made by students in the sixth form, the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school, the impact of the school's specialist status, the effectiveness of the school in promoting community cohesion and the quality of the school's capacity for continuous improvement.

Evidence was collected from: visits to lessons, national assessment data and the school's own analyses, observation of lessons and of the school at work, discussions with staff, governors and students, and parents' questionnaires. 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

Ranelagh Church of England School is an average-sized and oversubscribed school, celebrating its 300th anniversary this year. It serves the Anglican deaneries of Bracknell and Sonning. Four fifths of the student population come from Bracknell Forest, although they transfer from over 40 primary schools. The proportion of those eligible for free school meals is very low. Most students are from White British backgrounds, reflecting the composition of the local community. The number whose first language is not English is low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about average, although the number with a statement of special educational needs is above average. A number of these have behavioural, emotional and social needs and there are some students with autistic spectrum disorder. The school has a specialist unit for 12 students with specific learning difficulties. The school holds many awards, including Artsmark gold and national accreditation for peer mentoring. The headteacher has just been appointed as a National Leader of Education, and the school is now a National Support School. Ranelagh was designated a Specialist College for Visual Arts and Business Enterprise in 2004 and it was awarded High Performing Specialist Status in mathematics and computing in 2008. The school has recently been authorised to deliver the International Baccalaureate Diploma from September 2009. In January 2008 the school was inspected as part of Ofsted's survey inspection programme in relation to business education, and was judged to be outstanding in this aspect of its work.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Ranelagh is an outstanding school and sixth form. Its striking features are the progress that students make in their learning and personal development, and the remarkable contribution they make to the leadership and management of the school. The overwhelming majority of parents were fulsome in their praise of the school, particularly in how well it is led and managed. This was typified in one comment: 'Ranelagh continues to deliver both a caring and highly motivating environment for our children. What better platform could be given for a start out in life?'

The school is highly successful in nurturing and harnessing the motivation of students to learn and in stretching them academically. Students enter the main school with above-average attainment. The quality of teaching and the care, guidance and support provided by the staff are such that students of all abilities make excellent progress in relation to their capabilities and needs. In many instances they not only reach but exceed their challenging targets. Standards at the end of all key stages have been exceptionally high since the last inspection. In 2008, at the end of Key Stage 3, almost every student gained Level 5 in English, mathematics and science and very high proportions achieved higher levels in these subjects. GCSE examination results exceeded the targets the school had set itself, with 97% of students achieving five or more A\*-C grades and 89% achieving these grades including English and mathematics. Students gained A/A\* grades which were well above average in 10 subjects, including the specialist subjects of art and design and mathematics. Achievement was exceptionally high in many other subjects such as business studies, with 92% gaining a higher grade. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those in the specialist unit, also make excellent progress because of the quality of the support they receive from teachers and support staff alike.

At Ranelagh absolute priority is given to people and to learning. This is underpinned by the promotion of Christian aims, values and ethos and its learning culture. This is the 'DNA' of the school and permeates everything it does. Coupled with the provision of exceptional care, support and guidance, it strongly contributes to the students' outstanding spiritual, social, moral, cultural and personal development. They flourish in an encouraging, stimulating and safe environment. Students develop exceptionally well as confident, enthusiastic and creative learners and responsible members of the school and wider community. They enjoy coming to school and this can be seen in very high attendance rates. Inspectors saw excellent behaviour during their visit and this is endorsed by the majority of parents. Some students remarked that there are occasional lapses where one or two do not behave to the same high standard as others, but this is always addressed. The curriculum contributes significantly to students' economic well-being. For instance, they develop highly effective creative and entrepreneurial skills which prepare them well for life beyond school.

Students have a pronounced impact on the life of the school and the wider community. They play an active role in the school's outstanding promotion of inclusion and community cohesion and they have a profound impact on the leadership and management of the school. Students participate in an incredible range of opportunities. Some act as learning partners, observing the quality of teaching and learning. Their feedback gives teachers a different perspective on learning and provides students themselves with a great understanding of themselves as learners. Those involved in the developing the 'Rights Respecting School' initiative spoke proudly about the training they had provided to staff. Others are involved in peer mentoring, helping those who may be struggling to catch up. National accreditation for peer mentoring indicates the

success of this work. Students have had a say in the contract arrangements for catering, ensuring that their well-developed understanding of healthy living was reflected in the choice of provider. Two representatives from the student body sit on the governing body. Others are involved in the highly effective school council or other working groups.

Students make exceptional progress in their learning and achieve so highly because of their own motivation and hard work, but also because of the quality of teaching. Snapshots of lesson observations undertaken by inspectors confirm the school's own evaluation that it is outstanding. This is because of impressive skills of dedicated teachers and other staff, and the vibrant learning environment where students thrive and develop excellent higher-order thinking and learning skills. Displays of a high quality add greatly to the classrooms, and the corridors are adorned with the students' impressive artistic work. The recent award of Artsmark gold is a recognition of the exceptionally high level of arts provision in the school. All aspects of professional development and practice are linked to improving teaching and learning. This relentless focus means that staff are continually looking to hone their skills. Monitoring is rigorous, and additional support and guidance is provided if there is any variability in the high standards expected of staff. Inspectors observed a wide range of significant strengths in lessons. Staff are skilled in encouraging students to problem-solve in all subjects and develop self-evaluation, critical thinking and analytical skills. Students are confident and articulate in responding to well-thought-out and effective questioning. The tremendous pace in lessons is possible because of the students' eagerness to learn. Lessons are characterised by careful planning and differentiated response to meet learning needs. Assessment and the dialogue between teachers and students about their progress are of a very high quality.

'Servant leadership' is central to the school's philosophy and, consequently, meeting the support needs of staff and students alike is given high priority. Pastoral and academic care, guidance and support are equally strong and contribute greatly to students' all-round development. Staff are tenacious in ensuring that the various systems for tracking progress, safeguarding and managing behaviour and attendance are rigorous and effective. Consequently, they have a very comprehensive and accurate understanding of students' needs and how they are progressing. They target support and intervention to good effect. The school promotes inclusive practice and responds well to the challenge that this sometimes presents in meeting the specific learning, emotional or behavioural needs of some students. The school has forged excellent links with external agencies and this reflects their commitment to meeting the welfare of its students. Transition arrangements from primary school are very good for Year 7 students and for those in Year 11 moving to the sixth form.

The curriculum is exciting and engaging and enriched by a wealth of popular extra-curricular activities. It has developed immensely since the last inspection, reflected for example, in more effective collaboration with schools to deliver the 14-19 curriculum. The impact of specialist subjects is threaded through the curriculum, giving impetus to some noteworthy developments. Students and staff spoke excitedly about the 'Creative Partnerships - Change School' project 'Under my Skin', which is being developed by staff and some students in Years 8 and 10. They are constructing a Mongolian yurt or tent, drawing on a range of subjects such as art, information and communication technology and English. This will become a temporary dwelling, enabling students to have sensory multicultural experiences. All students have an opportunity to work with a business entrepreneur and/or an artist in residence. Increased personalisation of the curriculum means that options such as the increased flexibility programme are highly effective, for instance in meeting the needs of some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The sustained excellence and continuous improvement of Ranelagh would not be possible without remarkable leadership and management at all levels, including the students. This aspect of the school was signalled out by parents for particularly high and deserved praise. Creative vision, the passionate embracing of new initiatives and a thirst for improvement are driven by an inspiring headteacher, supported by an exceptionally strong senior management team, very able and efficient middle leaders and highly competent staff at all levels. They receive excellent support from a proactive and challenging governing body. The school is outward-looking and is highly successful in the impact it has on partnership-working with other schools, its two deaneries and the local and wider community. Staff take forward new initiatives in a measured way, only if these serve to further enhance the learning of students. The school, for example, is well placed to contribute significantly in its new role as National Support School and to deliver the International Baccalaureate and staff recognise that these opportunities will also bring new challenges. Planning for the future is thorough and gives appropriate attention to new developments and to sustaining and fine-tuning aspects of existing provision. Given its history of achievements to date, its lack of complacency and the quality of provision at every level, the school has an outstanding capacity for continued improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is outstanding. The majority of students transfer from Year 11 and they continue to make excellent progress. The extensive curriculum is stimulating and challenging. Teaching is consistently of a very high quality and students make excellent progress because of this. They enjoy their lessons. Students spoke to inspectors of the excellent relationships they have with their teachers, regarding them as learning partners as well as educators. Students achieve examination results that are exceptionally high. For instance, in 2008 the proportion achieving A-B grade in GCE A level examinations as well as in Applied AS and Applied A level examinations, was well above national averages. Students achieved exceptionally well in most subjects including specialist subjects. Staff take corrective action to address any occasional blips in the performance of any subject for a particular cohort, and current progress indicates that this is being successful. The proportion of students completing their course is exceptionally high, which is testament of their own motivation and the quality of the provision. Students make well-informed choices because of the exceptional individual support and guidance they receive from staff. Almost all students go on to higher or further education. Excellent leadership and management can be seen in the highly effective monitoring of and support for students' academic progress and personal development. As with the students lower down the school, sixth formers are impressive leaders and make a significant contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. Their impact on the local community can be seen in their work with a local special school and through their work as sports leaders. Their impact on the global community is exemplified through Wilderness Expertise trips to places such as Zambia; this has resulted in close links and support for the local community.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that new initiatives, such as the International Baccalaureate, enhance the school's outstanding learning culture and the progress students make.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	

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<sup>1</sup>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.



### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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**

05 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Ranelagh Church of England School, Bracknell, RG12 9DA

Thank you for sharing your views so openly with us during the inspection of your school and for giving us a chance to see you at work. Your school is truly gold standard in every respect and has been for some years. This is not just the result of the fantastic leadership and management of Mrs Winrow and her staff. It is also because of the contribution you make to the life of the school and beyond it. We were overwhelmed with the wide range of ways in which you make a difference to each other, to teachers and to people outside the school. You develop exceptionally good leadership skills, self-confidence, maturity and a deep sense of your responsibility for others.

The results you achieve in exams and the progress you make in your learning is not just because of the excellent teaching you receive, but your own enthusiasm to learn. You also benefit from a brilliant curriculum which gives you the chance to be creative and to develop artistic and entrepreneurial skills. Your attendance at school is a credit to you because it is so high and it also is an indication that you enjoy your time there. One of your parents wrote that Ranelagh is 'an exceptional school where our son is nurtured and taught to reach his full all-round ability'. This was the view of most of your parents and we could not agree more. A number of you described the school as your 'family' and we believe this speaks volumes about the exceptional care, guidance and support you receive.

This is the 300th anniversary of the founding of the school and we suggest that among your celebrations you include the fact that your school has been judged to be outstanding. Congratulations for the part you have played in this.

We know there are exciting plans ahead for the school such as the International Baccalaureate which starts in September. We have asked the staff to make sure that they develop these initiatives in such a way as to help you become even more successful in your learning and personal development.

I wish you every success for your futures.

Yours faithfully

John Kennedy

Her Majesty's Inspector