

Royal Latin School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110512
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325163
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Scott (HMI)

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (Selective)
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1252
Sixth form	386
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Mulholland
Headteacher	Mr A Robert Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	24 May 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons, observed practice in other lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at school development plans, minutes from governors' meetings, curriculum plans and a range of other documentation provided by the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress students are currently making and whether there are significant variations between groups of students
- how effectively teaching and assessment help students to make progress
- the impact of the school's leadership on improving the school.

Information about the school

Royal Latin School is a selective grammar school that draws students from among the top one third of the ability range in the local authority eleven-plus tests. The school is larger than average and has a large sixth form. It has specialist college status for science and a second specialism as a training school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion of students whose first language is believed not to be English is also below average. There are very few students with a statement of special educational need; these include individuals with visual impairment or a physical disability, or with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Royal Latin School is providing students with an outstanding education. Students demonstrate extremely mature attitudes and thoughtful behaviour. They make outstanding progress and attain very high standards in GCSE and GCE A-level examinations. These outcomes are underpinned by good teaching, an extremely effective curriculum and exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support. Moreover, students are highly motivated, have clear aspirations for the future and enjoy their learning greatly. They are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps in learning and the world of work.

There is a large proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Overall, teaching is good. The quality of lessons is, however, inconsistent across the school in relation to the pace of learning, the level of challenge provided to students and the advice students are given about how to improve their work. While the school has taken some effective action to improve teaching, a significant proportion of teaching is still only satisfactory.

This high-performing school shows no complacency. Leadership and management are outstanding and have secured improvements over the last three years. Leaders are aiming to raise standards still further. They have set challenging targets both for departments and for students, and track progress against these assiduously. Rigorous analysis of the school's performance is undertaken, leading to high-quality planning for improvement in good consultation with all stakeholders. Governors hold the school to account very effectively. They challenge areas of relative weakness and use a wide range of strategies to ensure they are well informed about the school's effectiveness in order to identify future development needs. The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. The vast majority of parents are happy with their child's experience at this school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

In order to raise standards further, leaders should ensure that teachers where necessary:

- make greater use of assessment for learning to provide appropriately high levels of challenge in all lessons

- increase the pace of learning in lessons
- provide students with clear advice about how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enjoy being at this school enormously. The school sets high expectations of students' academic and personal achievements, as do the students themselves who do their best to rise to them. Virtually all students gain five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and many gain far more than five. The proportion of students gaining A* or A grades is exceptionally high. A-level results are similarly outstanding. There are no significant differences in outcomes for any groups within the school.

Students are eager and highly motivated learners and make good use of every opportunity presented to them. They make at least good progress in most lessons and this, coupled with their excellent attitudes to work and learning, results in their outstanding achievements. Students respond best when challenged by absorbing tasks and given the freedom and encouragement to make decisions and investigate independently or in groups. In some lessons, however, learning is rather passive or lacking in pace. When teachers' questioning is thought-provoking, students' engagement in their work is increased and they explore and learn with relish.

Students' behaviour and attendance are outstanding. Students cooperate exceptionally well with each other and with teachers, and show considerable respect for all members of the school community and for visitors. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through their involvement in a wide range of activities, such as a peer listening service, acting as subject mentors, working in the promotion of healthy lifestyles in partner schools and providing an annual programme of sport, music and science for students in a local special school. Students also host members of the British Legion and other veterans at the school's remembrance service and take part in the town's events such as the annual Christmas parade in support of charities.

Students develop their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills extremely well. These skills contribute greatly to their future economic well-being. Students develop a very clear understanding of their moral and social responsibilities. Their spiritual and cultural development is excellent. Students' understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives is outstanding. They readily take advantage of the wide range of healthy meals provided and of the extensive range of sports and leisure activities offered by the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

How effective is the provision?

Educational provision is of high quality. Teaching is good overall. The curriculum, care, guidance and support have many exemplary features.

In outstanding and good lessons, students work in close partnership with their teachers to explore well-presented ideas, often studying topics to levels beyond those required in the examination syllabus. Excellent planning and questioning by teachers promotes students' curiosity. In contrast, some lessons are only satisfactory. In these, although students' progress is adequate, the pace is relatively slow, teachers' use of data about students' attainment is not used well to provide challenging tasks, and guidance to students about how to improve their work is limited. Throughout the school, teachers' subject knowledge is strong, as is their ability to make accurate evaluations of students' attainment in terms of National Curriculum levels or examination grades. Teachers help students to understand their targets and, in the better lessons, also to be entirely clear about the incremental steps in learning that are required to reach these targets.

The curriculum meets the needs of students extremely well. It is being constantly developed in the light of reviews and evaluations in order to raise standards further. Students' and parents' views are taken account of to a great extent in designing the curriculum. The majority of students follow GCSE courses in three separate sciences. This fact and the positive impact of the science specialism have resulted in a significantly increased take-up of science in the sixth form.

Students who require additional academic support are very well provided for, with additional resources, learning support assistants and adjustments to the curriculum to ensure that they can achieve as well as others in the school.

Students receive extremely good personal support because great attention is given to understanding each one's individual needs. Students are helped to settle in quickly. They report that they are well informed and guided about option choices. Advice and guidance regarding careers and applications for university entrance are highly valued by students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and wider leadership team have created a very positive ethos in the school, with a clear vision to raise achievement further. Leaders at all levels have raised expectations of students' achievements and secured the commitment of staff to bring about improvements across all outcomes for students. The school is not complacent about its outstanding record of high attainment. It has implemented an effective programme of changes, particularly in relation to teaching, to ensure that even greater progress is made by all students. Its work as a training school impacts positively on not only its own students but also other local partner schools. There remains a significant proportion of satisfactory teaching and learning, but this is being challenged and the quality improved through effective monitoring and support strategies. Leaders are confident in their use of data about students' performance to track progress and trigger interventions to support students at risk of falling behind.

Leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, are clear about the strengths and the areas needing improvement in the school. They ensure accurate checks take place through departmental reviews and whole-school self-evaluation. They are working hard to engage with parents and carers and to take account of their views in decision making, welcoming their comments and responding well to their concerns. The school has undertaken a range of consultations with stakeholders and recognises this as an area that it wants to develop further.

The school is involved in a wide range of community activities, including links with international schools in Brazil, France and Zambia. A clear strategy has been developed to promote community cohesion. This is being implemented effectively and is having an increasing impact on students.

The school promotes equality very positively. All students feel valued and respected. The school has clear and effective systems and policies to deal with the small number of bullying incidents. Students work well together and feel that this is an inclusive and welcoming school, with harmonious relationships between all members of the community.

The school meets current government legislation regarding safeguarding and has demonstrated a systematic approach to ensuring that students have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The school works well with the local

authority in relation to safeguarding students.

The outstanding outcomes for students and the effective deployment of resources demonstrate that the school provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

In this outstanding sixth form, students achieve extremely well and are proud to be a part of the school and contribute greatly to it. As in the main school, standards are exceptionally high. Students achieve outstanding A-level examination results and gain access to a wide range of degree-level courses. They have an excellent understanding of career opportunities because of the outstanding guidance they receive in this and other respects. For example, the school offers high-quality tailored provision for students with particular career aspirations such as medicine, dentistry and law. The students who join the sixth form in Year 12 from other schools feel that the support they receive on joining the school is highly effective and that it is easy to settle in. The sixth form shares the characteristics of the school as a whole in that teaching is good, the curriculum excellent and leadership and management outstanding.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents express a range of strong and positive views about the school and the nature of the provision. A small minority of parents express concerns about inconsistencies in teaching. There were a small number of comments from parents about changes, such as those in the timing of the school day and in the curriculum. The school showed evidence that it had considered these and other views carefully and responded appropriately to the parents either collectively or on an individual basis.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Royal Latin School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, they are asked to record an answer to all the questions for each of their children.

The inspection team received 343 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 2,005 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	234	100	8	1

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007/08, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007/08, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007/08, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007/08, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff, and running the school.



21 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Royal Latin School, Buckingham, MK18 1AX

I would like to thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave me and the team of inspectors on our recent visit to your school. We were very impressed with your exceptionally positive attitudes towards work and commitment to school life. You respond very well to the challenges set by teachers in many lessons. You make outstanding progress. This is clear from the exceptionally high standards you reach in GCSE and GCE A-level examinations.

Your school is outstanding. It provides you with an excellent curriculum, comprising a wide range of opportunities which support your academic and personal development extremely well. Moreover, the school's systems of support, care and guidance are highly effective and also contribute to the excellent outcomes which you achieve. They enable you to have a highly developed understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. There is much good and outstanding teaching at Royal Latin but also some that is only satisfactory. Your school is extremely well led. The headteacher and leadership team are taking steps to ensure that high standards are not only maintained but rise further. We have asked the school to ensure that all teaching is good or better by making sure that:

- teachers make even greater use of information about what you can already do in order to provide tasks and activities that challenge you fully
- you work with good pace in all lessons
- you are given consistently good guidance about how to improve your work and are clear about the short-term targets to work towards.

You already take an active part in school life and readily take on many responsibilities in the school, contributing greatly to it and to the local and wider community. We hope that you keep on demanding the best from the school through your active participation in school life.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Paul Scott
Her Majesty's Inspector

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