

# Ripon College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121688
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327548
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Maddison 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	564
Sixth form	52
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Annette Beckwith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Barry Found
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Clotherholme Road Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 2DE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01765 604 564
<b>Fax number</b>	01765 604 564

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average sized school serving the city of Ripon and surrounding villages. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is below average. Whereas the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well above average. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. There are very few looked after children and there is a small number of students for whom English is not their first language. Pupil mobility is higher than average and this is principally due to the arrival and departure of children whose families are based locally with the army. Ripon has selective education and this affects the attainment profile of the students who enter the college. As a result, there are fewer able students in the college than are usually found on entry to secondary school. The college has a small sixth form. It works in partnership with Ripon Grammar School offering a combination of vocational and academic subjects to students from both schools. The college became a specialist technology college in 2000 and it now has extended schools provision.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving college. After a period in which improvements had slowed, outcomes for students are now improving again. The college is developing some important strengths, most notably in pastoral care, in its curriculum at Key Stage 4, and in the commitment and determination of senior leaders. It provides a safe and secure environment in which students feel valued and well cared for. As a result, the college is living up to its ambition to inspire and challenge students so that they can succeed.

Achievement is satisfactory. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but it is broadly average. However, the attainment profile of students is falling and many students enter Year 7 with weak literacy skills. The college has taken some action to improve basic literacy skills but plans have yet to impact upon student attainment. Although results fluctuate, students attain average standards in national examinations at the end of Year 11. Unvalidated data for 2008 indicates some improvements in students' performance at GCSE. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more subjects including English and mathematics at the higher grades fell. The college has responded and action is being taken to help students currently in Year 11 to achieve the best results possible. In the sixth form standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

The personal development and well-being of the students are satisfactory, as is the care, guidance and support they receive. Pastoral care is good and reflects the college's ethos. Students are well known to staff and say they feel valued as individuals and looked after. However, they are keen for their views to be heard more effectively, principally through the recently reconstituted student council. Students have responded positively to the 'Attitudes to Learning' initiative: attendance is getting better, persistent absenteeism is falling, and behaviour is improving. Students work well together and are effectively acquiring the skills they will need in later life. A varied programme of additional and extra-curricular activities contributes valuably to their academic and personal development. The curriculum is enhanced by enrichment days, most of which are related to the college's technology specialism.

Although the curriculum overall is satisfactory, it is good at Key Stage 4. This is because it meets students' needs, aptitudes and interests more appropriately. Students appreciate the opportunities open to them and they are beginning to do better in their work. Curriculum development is also taking place at Key Stage 3 and this work exemplifies the college's move towards a more personalised curriculum for all students. Specialist status is beginning to have a positive impact on expectations across the college. Teaching is contributing to the improvement in achievement but it is not yet good overall because too many lessons are satisfactory rather than good. Academic guidance is satisfactory; most students know their targets and the checking of students' academic performance provides the college with much useful data. However, this data is not used effectively by teachers in their planning. In addition, the marking of students' work is variable. As a result, students do not make as much progress as they could because they are not always challenged appropriately in lessons and they do not have a clear picture on how to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently appointed headteacher has a clear understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and is focused on improving outcomes for students. He is well supported by an energetic and determined senior leadership team. A comprehensive restructuring of senior and middle leader roles and responsibilities and the

introduction of new systems and structures, including 'Schools of Learning', means that many initiatives to bring about better outcomes for students are at an early stage of development. Senior leaders recognise that quality assurance procedures are not yet robust enough to ensure that plans for improvement are implemented consistently across the college. Although the proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was low, the vast majority who did complete them expressed satisfaction with the college and felt that their children are safe and well cared for. However, a number of parents expressed disappointment that their views were not sought and not taken account of. Governance is satisfactory and improving. Governors are knowledgeable, are aware of the college's priorities for improvement and meet regularly to execute their statutory duties. They give their support but are increasingly prepared to challenge. Effective steps have been taken to address the areas for improvement highlighted at the last inspection and in response to the citizenship survey inspection in 2007. There is a clear strategy in place for the development of citizenship for all students not least through the provision of discrete lessons on the timetable. The capacity for improvement is satisfactory.

### **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

#### **Grade: 3**

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory and standards are rising. Students gain results in A-level examinations which are broadly in line with national averages. They have access to a wide range of academic and vocational courses in the college, in collaboration with the neighbouring selective grammar school and increasingly with other local schools. Students appreciate the curriculum opportunities which are provided for them. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is satisfactory. Whilst lessons have similar features to those found in the rest of the college, in the sixth form teachers give individual support which encourages students' independent learning and helps them to make progress. Students' personal development is satisfactory, as is their care, guidance and support. Students welcome the individual guidance which is being developed through closer liaison with careers advisers and the improved checking of their performance. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The college has developed a clear vision for the future development of the sixth form. It has started to raise student expectations by promoting a positive culture of achievement and has focused on improving student retention and attendance rates, especially by developing closer links with parents. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

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

- Improve literacy skills across the college.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good or better.
- Make better use of performance data to inform planning and classroom practice and promote students' achievement.
- Develop robust quality assurance procedures to ensure consistency so that whole-college plans bring about better outcomes for students.

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**

The achievement of students is satisfactory and standards across the college are average. There is room for further improvement and for more students to make greater progress. In recent years results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 have fluctuated. In 2007, for example, standards fell in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and were below the national average. However, at Key Stage 4 the proportion of students gaining five subjects at the higher grades was above the national average. The college's unvalidated data for 2008 indicates that results are again variable. Standards improved in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and were above the national average in mathematics. However, the proportion of students gaining five subjects at the higher grades at GCSE fell below the national average. The college has analysed the reasons for the inconsistencies in students' performance and is putting in place a series of appropriate measures to raise standards. Evidence from students' books and from lessons indicates that achievement is improving. This is because students in the main have positive attitudes to learning; support is targeted to help those students who particularly need it; and the curriculum is being developed so that it meets more appropriately students' needs and aptitudes. Throughout the college students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Improvements in the proportion of students gaining A to E grades and A to B grades at A-Level in 2008 indicate that there have been some improvements in attainment in the sixth form. Achievement is higher in vocational subjects but overall achievement is satisfactory and standards are average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The personal development and well-being of the students is satisfactory, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students feel secure in college and say that they are confident that staff or older students will help them resolve any problems that may arise. Students understand how to manage risk and their adoption of safe practices is good. They are developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle; they benefit from regular exercise through their participation in physical education and sport, both during the college day and in extra-curricular activities, and they appreciate the improvements in food available in college. Students have positive attitudes to college and to learning. This is shown by their improved attendance (which is now satisfactory), by their improving behaviour in lessons and around the college, and by their constructive relationships with each other and with staff. It is also due to the college's rewards system and effective behaviour management initiatives which have helped to reduce both low-level disruption in lessons and exclusions. Although students' views are becoming more important within the college community, the student council has only recently been reconstituted. As a result, its work is embryonic and it has yet to make an impact across the whole college. Growing links with external providers and an increasing range of vocational courses at GCSE are helping students to develop valuable skills and knowledge which will support their future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but it is improving. This is because of the introduction of a more rigorous and consistent programme of lesson observations which have led to the sharing of good practice between teachers and the provision of effective support where it is needed. However, there are still inconsistencies in practice and inspectors observed lessons ranging from outstanding to inadequate. In most lessons teachers share objectives with students and use their subject knowledge to give clear explanations of topics. This helps to ensure that students make at least satisfactory progress. In the best lessons, high teacher expectations, challenging questioning, a range of activities and teaching styles, and the allocation of sufficient time to review what has been learned in the lesson, serve to engage students and help most to achieve well. However, too many lessons are satisfactory rather than good. In these the students are not sufficiently engaged and the pace of learning is too slow. In addition work is set which does not match students' abilities. As a result students become bored, low-level disruptive behaviour occurs and too many do not achieve as well as they could. The teaching and learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Overall, teaching is stronger in the sixth form principally because work is directed precisely to meet the needs of individual students.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The college provides a satisfactory curriculum. However, there is insufficient provision for the development of students' literacy skills and this undermines their progress. The curriculum has some good features at Key Stage 4. It is well planned, increasingly in partnership with neighbouring schools and colleges, and effectively reflects the needs of the students, the college's context and its specialist status. The college is taking steps to develop the curriculum at Key Stage 3 with the recent introduction of the 'Opening Minds' course in Year 7 which is designed to ease the students' transition into secondary school and equip them with the skills to become successful learners. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported in lessons, and for higher attaining students the curriculum is extended to offer additional challenges including the opportunity to be entered early for some GCSE examinations. Specialist technology college status has been used to enhance the curriculum through the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in some subjects and the provision of vocational courses and themed activity days. There is a satisfactory range of enrichment activities. The well-planned personal, social and health education curriculum, together with the careers and work experience programmes, make a satisfactory contribution to students' personal development and enable students to make informed decisions about their next steps after leaving college.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pastoral care of the students is good and is beginning to contribute effectively to students' personal development and their academic progress. Current national requirements for safeguarding students are met. Arrangements for child protection are sound, especially the way in which the college cares for its more vulnerable

students. All necessary risk assessments are undertaken. The college has put in place a range of initiatives to strengthen pastoral care, for example the introduction of mixed-year tutor groups. This work is at an early stage but its initial impact amongst students is positive. Particularly effective provision is made for those who are at risk of exclusion and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Rigorous procedures for promoting good attendance have had a considerable impact on improving overall attendance and in reducing persistent absenteeism. Academic guidance for students is satisfactory. Work is regularly marked but the quality of the marking varies. Too often it does not give enough subject-specific advice about what students need to do to improve their work. Students are made aware of their personal targets and the more accurate checking of students' performance is providing a better insight into academic progress. However, the data is not yet used well enough by teachers to inform both their planning and their classroom practice with the aim of raising achievement.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher leads with conviction, has a clear vision for the college and is ably supported by a dedicated senior leadership team. Together they are committed to improving the college. A recent restructuring of leadership and management roles has meant that many leaders and managers are new in post. However, they are aware of the role that they play in the implementation of the improvement agenda and recognise that they will be held to account for their performance. Nevertheless, senior leaders acknowledge that robust quality assurance procedures, based on clear and appropriate systems, are essential for consistency if whole-college plans are to bring about better outcomes for students. Governance is satisfactory; governors meet regularly and are supportive of the college. They have become increasingly aware of their role but only recently have they begun to hold the college to account more robustly. Equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled but low levels of literacy mean that some learners do not achieve as well as they can. Action has been taken across subjects to deal with this but initiatives have not been systematic. As a result, for too many students progress in improving literacy is too slow. The college has put in place appropriate plans to develop its contribution to community cohesion but they have yet to impact fully upon students' understanding of their role and responsibilities. Nevertheless, students are developing their awareness of Britain as a diverse society and how important it is to engage with others from different communities. The college has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and action plans are appropriately focused on those areas which require the most improvement. The college runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Financial management is sound and ensures that staff and resources are deployed appropriately. As a result, the college offers satisfactory value for money.



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

**Achievement and standards**

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

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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>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	3	
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**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We greatly appreciated the time you spent talking to us and we found your comments very helpful. As well as coming into lessons and looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents.

We came to the college to find out what is going well and what could be improved. We found that:

- you attend a satisfactory and improving college
- you have positive attitudes to learning and your behaviour is improving
- you make satisfactory progress in your lessons though you could do much better
- you receive good pastoral care and your understanding and adoption of safe practices and healthy lifestyles are also good
- your curriculum is good at Key Stage 4
- the lessons you attend are satisfactory and improving.

We have asked the headteacher, the staff and the governors to help all of you do much better in your work. In particular we have asked Mr Found to make sure that:

- you have good reading and writing skills
- the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is improved so that it is consistently good or better
- your teachers use assessment information they have about each of you to guide you more closely in planning the lessons and the work they give you
- senior leaders make it a priority that everyone at the college acts in a consistent way to make sure standards of education and care improve further.

Your teachers are working hard on your behalf and the headteacher and senior leaders are committed to improving the college further. However, it is also up to you to aim high, listen to their advice, behave well and always try your best.

We very much enjoyed visiting your college and I would like to thank you once again for being so friendly and polite.