

Roding Valley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115235
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338544
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Walker

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 of pupils on the school roll	1207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Wershof
Headteacher	Paul Banks
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 43 lessons and observed 28 teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence, including the school development plan, the tracking system to monitor the students' progress, safeguarding documentation, the work students were doing in their books and the questionnaires completed by staff, a sample of students and 146 parents.

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

- the rate of progress of all groups of students in the school
- the effectiveness of teaching in engaging the students so that they make at least satisfactory progress
- the quality of the curriculum and the systems of care, guidance and support for the students
- the effectiveness of the leadership and management in driving improvements in the school.

Information about the school

The school is larger than other secondary schools. It is situated on the edge of Epping Forest on the fringe of the London conurbation. The school takes students from a number of primary schools in the Roding valley. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds although a small number are from a range of minority ethnic groups. A very small percentage of students do not have English as their first language. The proportion of students with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the percentage known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has received National Healthy School Status and the Sports Mark awards.

The school is designated as a specialist performing arts college. The new headteacher has been in post since January 2010.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. It has some good features. It is now undergoing a period of significant improvement in both the attainment and the personal development of the students. The new headteacher provides very effective and collaborative leadership so that there is a clear vision for continuous improvement in the school. He has introduced new systems and structures which are already leading to noticeable improvements in the attitude and progress of the students.

Students make satisfactory progress, given their average starting points, and leave with broadly average standards. The 2009 GCSE results for Year 11 students were broadly in line with the national average with 65% of students gaining five A* to C grades. Results demonstrated an improvement in standards across a range of subjects, including English. However, the school acknowledges the need to further raise standards across all subjects. This is particularly the case in both mathematics and science, where standards were slightly below average at GCSE. The newly introduced tracking system for progress is identifying underachieving students, who then receive appropriate support through a range of intervention strategies. The assessment information shows that students are now set challenging targets in all years and the majority are making at least satisfactory progress in their work. The recent modular examination results in mathematics and science indicate that the majority of students are making at least satisfactory progress and are in line to achieve their target minimum grades. A significant number of students in Year 10 and 11 are also making good progress. The challenge for the school is to ensure that all students are sufficiently challenged and supported to gain their target minimum grades in each subject.

The high standard of care, guidance and support is greatly supporting the improvements in students' personal development. The majority behave well and enjoy coming to school. Students of all ages feel safe and secure in the school. They speak highly of the opportunities that are available at Roding Valley High School. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with some examples of good and outstanding practice. The school recognises the need to improve further the overall quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate the progress of students. Activities in lessons do not always engage and motivate the students in their learning. Planning in lessons is not consistently informed by assessment information to fully meet the different needs of the students. Teachers are not sufficiently sharing good practice in teaching and learning to ensure that students' progress is consistently good in all subjects and lessons. Curriculum provision is satisfactory and provides a sound base for meeting the different learning needs of the students. The specialist status in the performing arts is greatly enhancing the curriculum provision and providing additional enrichment activities for the students.

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The governing body has not previously had sufficient information to undertake its roles and responsibilities and, as a result, it has not challenged the school enough to address weaknesses and bring about the necessary improvements. It has also not been sufficiently rigorous in its review of the school's policies and statutory responsibilities. However, since the appointment of the new headteacher, the school has taken appropriate steps to remedy weaknesses and there are already positive indications that these are beginning to improve standards. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is in no doubt about the improvements needed. The school development plan is setting challenging targets to raise standards. The school has effectively challenged and remediated inadequate management and teaching in order to ensure improvements in students' attainment and progress. The shared vision of the headteacher, the robust systems of tracking students' progress, the greater accountability for standards in teaching, the strategic plans for improvement and the clear indications of significant improvements in standards indicate that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards of attainment across the school so that the proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is above the national average by ensuring that teachers :
 - identify and provide additional support for underachieving students
 - prepare students to develop their skills appropriately for examinations in mathematics and science
 - challenge and support students to gain the target minimum grades in all subject areas.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the school by making sure that all teachers:
 - ensure that activities fully engage and motivate the students in their learning
 - use assessment information effectively to inform their planning so that the work is matched to the learning needs of individual students
 - agree and share the best practice in teaching and learning.
- Develop the governing body so that they can become more effective in their evaluating and monitoring roles by:
 - ensuring targeted training is provided on a regular basis for governors so that they are fully able to undertake their roles and responsibilities
 - increase the rigour of their review processes of all school policies and statutory responsibilities
 - ensure that governors are fully involved in the evaluation and monitoring of developments in the school.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may

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receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Evidence from students' work seen during the inspection demonstrates that the majority of classes are making at least satisfactory progress during the current year. Students are attentive and display an eagerness to do well in their work when they are challenged and supported. Most students enjoy learning and make satisfactory progress from their close to average starting points. The atmosphere in most lessons is positive and the students want to do well. Where activities are well-chosen, students display interest and sustain good levels of concentration. For example, Year 7 students made good progress in developing their understanding of mathematical rotations through well-targeted questioning and imaginative use of technology. However, the pace of learning and levels of concentration fall where work does not sufficiently challenge the students.

By the end of Year 9, students make satisfactory progress and more students are now attaining the higher levels in English and mathematics. In 2009, 44% of students in Year 11 gained five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, which is slightly below the national average. The school identifies some underachievement in mathematics and science which is now being thoroughly addressed by the departments. The tracking information on student progress and modular examination results indicate that standards in these subjects are now at least average in Years 10 and 11.

Attainment in the performing arts is well above average and most students gain a qualification in at least one of these subjects. The school rightly identifies the potential underachievement by a small group of students in Year 11 and is supporting and mentoring them to improve their rates of progress. Additional support for students with special education needs and/or disabilities ensures that they are making satisfactory progress. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds also make satisfactory progress in line with other students in the school.

Most students have a very clear understanding of eating healthily and taking part in sporting activities. Attendance is improving and is now in line with the national average. Students raise money for a range of charities and make a good contribution to the local community by organising events for the elderly. The school council is active in supporting school improvements and is closely involved in the design of the new school uniform. Students relish the opportunities to take responsibility, such as looking after the younger students or acting as prefects. Students develop a satisfactory understanding of what they have to do to succeed in their future education and careers. Students show respect towards each other although they do not have a full awareness of the multicultural diversity of our society. They are perceptive and caring young people but they have limited opportunities to reflect on spiritual and moral issues.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, students are fully motivated and engaged in their learning. As a result, they display enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration. Good learning takes place when teachers extend the students and provide tasks which are appropriate to their individual ability. Where lessons are good or outstanding students are lifted out of their comfort zone and challenged to aim high. Probing questioning helps students to clarify their understanding and build on previous work. Less effective practice, for example where class management is less secure, results in a lack of concentration and restlessness in lessons. Teachers do not always provide sufficiently challenging work, which leads to some students coasting rather than accelerating their progress. While teachers have a firm grasp of the new system of assessment recording, insufficient use is made of this information to inform planning lessons in order to meet the different learning needs of the students.

The revised curriculum is adequately matched to the students' needs, interests and aspirations. It provides the students with a good range of learning opportunities, although it is too early to judge its full impact on increasing student progress. There is a broad choice of traditional GCSE subjects on offer at Key Stage 4, as well as an increasing number of vocational options. The 'Learn to Learn' programme in Key Stage 3 is providing an effective vehicle for delivering personal learning and thinking skills. Students learn how to work independently and cooperatively to solve problems in a

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

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number of enterprise activities, including work experience. Provision in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is satisfactory although the school rightly identifies the further development of these skills as key areas for improvement. Revised schemes of work in mathematics and science are already supporting improvements in student motivation and progress. The range of extra curricular activities and educational visits enhances the students' enjoyment and experience of school.

Arrangements for care, guidance and support are strengths of the school. Good working relationships between the school and external agencies benefit students, ensuring their social and learning needs are met through effective programmes. Vulnerable students are well supported by the Learning Support Unit and quickly integrated back into school. Tutors, heads of school and year heads are fully involved in promoting the academic and personal development of the students. Systems for monitoring absences have reduced the rates of persistence absence. Good arrangements are in place to support a smooth transition from a range of primary schools. Structured guidance through the careers programme helps students make confident and well informed choices about their future.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong and empowering leadership so that all staff are involved in the improvement of the school. He is very clear about the areas for development and is supporting the staff in raising the academic and personal outcomes of the students. Teachers comment on his collaborative approach and how 'the new headteacher is providing real leadership in the school'. The newly restructured senior leadership team is also providing a strong impetus for improvement across the school. Rigorous systems of monitoring teaching and tracking student progress are beginning to raise the standards achieved.

The school development plan is a comprehensive working document with clear actions and targets which are particularly focused on improving student attainment and progress. Governors are supportive and are eager to work closely with the headteacher and local authority in order to improve their contribution to the future success of the school. Subject leaders are developing their effectiveness in their planning, supporting and monitoring responsibilities. Robust procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements and underpin the school's very caring approach. The school has a strong

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commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities for all, although there is insufficient monitoring of the impact of the equality policy. The school is developing a positive relationship with parents and carers. Parents are given regular information about school events and the progress of their children. The school has good partnerships with community groups, external services and local schools. Strong links with the Town Centre Partnership encourage local businesses to support curriculum events, such as the Enterprise Days. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion through international days and community events although leaders acknowledge that more could be done to evaluate the impact of this work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school and its impact on their children's learning. Responses to the questionnaire included a number of detailed comments emphasising the good leadership of the headteacher, the improvements in the school and the caring approach of staff towards their children. A small minority of respondents suggested the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that, while the school deals effectively with students who display challenging behaviour, students lost concentration in a small number of lessons when the management of behaviour was less secure. A small minority of parents also mentioned that the school does not help them to support their children in their learning lessons. Inspectors have asked the headteacher to review this point with staff so that parent conferences can be more informative. There are no

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particular trends in the very small number of criticism made in the questionnaires.
Overall, parents' and carers' views reflect the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Roding Valley High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 146 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	27	86	59	15	10	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	29	96	66	8	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	26	93	64	12	8	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	18	94	64	21	14	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	20	14	101	69	14	10	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	14	81	55	35	24	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	17	94	64	23	16	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	33	23	88	60	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	21	93	64	17	12	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	23	70	48	27	18	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	14	92	63	17	12	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	27	18	93	64	11	8	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	27	87	60	19	13	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



20 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Roding Valley High School, Loughton, IG10 3JA

Thank you for making us so welcome and for talking to us during the inspection. Roding Valley High School is a satisfactory school with some good features. Your parents and carers told us how pleased they are with the improving standards of education in the school.

You have a very effective headteacher who is working well with the staff to secure improvements. You are making at least satisfactory progress and many of you are achieving standards that are above the national average. You have a wide range of option choices in Years 10 and 11 which allow you to succeed in subjects that really interest you. There is a range of extra curricular activities and educational visits which support your enjoyment of school. It was good to see that so many of you took an active part in the school production of 'Hairspray'. There is a positive atmosphere around the school and we were pleased to see that students are increasingly confident to celebrate their success in their work. Your behaviour is generally good and you show considerable respect towards each other. You are growing into confident, perceptive and caring young people.

We have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to do the following things to make the school even better.

Raise standards so that the proportion of students attaining five A*-C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is above the national average.

Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning across the school so that you are fully engaged in your work and make good progress.

Develop the role of the governing body so that they can become more effective in their evaluating and monitoring roles.

We have also requested teachers to challenge you more in lessons so that you achieve your target minimum grades in all subjects. Keep working hard and enjoying the many good things in your school.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Walker

Lead inspector

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