

Richmond School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121680
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	339999
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Katrina Gueli HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1580
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	358
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Annette Clark
Headteacher	Mr Phil Beever
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and documentation was scrutinised relating to the school's monitoring of provision; recent examination, assessment and attendance data; minutes of governing body meetings; external reports on the school and documents regarding the school's support for students who may be at risk of underachievement. Inspectors also examined documentation to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures. In addition, 195 questionnaires from parents and carers were analysed along with questionnaires returned by a representative group of students.

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

- students' attainment and progress to determine the significance of variation for different groups of students or in different subjects
- learning and progress of higher-attaining students in both the main school and the sixth form to determine whether teaching is sufficiently challenging for them
- the accuracy, consistency and robustness of systems used by leaders and managers to track, monitor and analyse the impact of their actions to bring about improvement
- the effectiveness of procedures to safeguard students.

Information about the school

Richmond School is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form, based in a rural location. There is a main school and a separate Year 7 site a short drive away. At the time of the inspection the main school was undergoing extensive building work due for completion in September 2011, when all students will be on a single site. A new sixth form building and indoor sports facility opened in September 2009, as part of the redevelopment. The headteacher will leave the school at the end of the autumn term 2009 and his replacement will start in January 2010. The number of students eligible for free school meals is low compared with other schools. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and very few of these students are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. A small number of students are children of service families stationed at the nearby Catterick Garrison. The school is a creative arts college and recently added science and mathematics as a second specialism. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Investors in People awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a good school where leaders and staff have successfully responded to the challenge of sustaining good-quality provision and good outcomes for students during the extensive and prolonged redevelopment work. Since the last inspection the rising trend in attainment at Key Stage 4 has been sustained and progress for most students has been good. Activities related to the creative arts specialism continue to make a strong contribution to students' enjoyment and to their good personal development while promoting good links between the school and wider community.

The quality of teaching is good overall and most students are engaged and well motivated in their lessons. Assessment is used effectively by some teachers to plan learning activities which are finely tuned to the learning needs of students, leading to good or better progress. However, in a minority of lessons teaching is of a 'one size fits all' approach so that the needs of individuals are not consistently well met, and progress is often satisfactory rather than good. The curriculum has many positive features, especially the very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities on offer. The school has looked at a range of models to secure specialist teaching for Year 7 without losing teaching time for the whole school. However, this issue will not be fully resolved until the school is occupying a single site.

Induction into the school is well planned and students settle in quickly. The separate lower school site provides a safe and welcoming environment for students to begin their time at secondary school. Staff provide a good level of pastoral care for students and links with external partners are well used to support individuals who are at risk of underachievement.

Members of the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the future of the school and their high expectations of students are reflected in the targets set. Students' opinions have been widely used to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision but the checking of the school's performance overall has been insufficiently accurate or robust. Consequently, although overall outcomes are good, the school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lessons are well tailored to meet the individual learning needs of students by using assessment information more effectively so all students make good or better progress.
- Improve the accuracy, consistency and robustness of systems to monitor the school's performance by:

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- ensuring that all senior and middle leaders have the necessary training and skills to monitor and evaluate performance rigorously
- undertaking regular quality assurance to ensure the accuracy of judgements and consistency of approach across subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most students are interested and well motivated in their lessons and work at a good pace, ensuring that their learning and progress is good overall. From a starting point of broadly average attainment on entry, students go on to achieve above average outcomes which confirms that good progress is made. However, leaders are aware that within this very positive picture of attainment and progress, some inconsistencies remain in the performance of different groups of students and subjects. For example, the learning and progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory rather than good owing in part to their higher than average levels of absence and the varying quality of planning to meet their individual learning needs. Similarly, many students who have made good progress in English and mathematics have underachieved in some subjects, such as information and communication technology, over several years.

Inspectors found behaviour in lessons and around school to be good although a few students raised concerns about behaviour via the questionnaires. Students in all years say they feel safe in school, noting very few incidents of bullying, and they have a sound understanding of how to keep themselves safe from harm. Many students show their commitment to a healthy lifestyle by taking part in a variety of extra-curricular sports. The vast majority of students make a good contribution to the school and wider community through fundraising, participation in sporting or creative activities and involvement in consultation and decision making. Students gain a good range of personal skills and qualities that ensures they are well equipped for the next stage of their education. Punctuality is good and attendance is above average. However, this above average figure masks the poorer attendance of Key Stage 4 students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, many of whom are persistent absentees.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge, a detailed understanding of examination requirements and the ability to use effective strategies to manage behaviour. Relationships with students are positive, creating a secure learning environment in lessons where students work well individually and in groups. Support for learning from other adults makes an effective contribution to students' progress. The use of assessment information to plan lessons that are well matched to the needs of individuals is too variable and learning is subsequently slower for some students. Feedback to ensure that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve is not always effective.

The curriculum contributes well to the outcomes for students. For example, the newly introduced life skills programme is effective in supporting the development of students' workplace and other skills that will contribute to their economic well-being. At Key Stage 4 there is a good range of courses, including work-based learning opportunities. These are well matched to the different needs and aptitudes of students. The specialisms make a significant contribution to enhancing provision, especially for out-of-hours activities, and participation rates are high. Despite these strengths, some aspects of the curriculum, such as a whole-school approach to the development of literacy and numeracy, are less well developed. In addition, weekly curriculum time is shorter than would be expected owing to movement of staff between the two sites. This has a limiting effect on some areas of provision, such as physical education in Key Stage 4. Consequently, the curriculum is satisfactory overall.

Students are very positive about the good care and support they receive. Guidance for

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students and their parents and carers is detailed so students can make well-informed choices at each point of transition in their education. Pastoral support is strong and individuals with specific learning or personal needs receive good-quality care. Systems to monitor and encourage regular attendance have been improved by recent changes and procedures to safeguard students are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	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 senior team has been effective in embedding ambition and driving improvement while maintaining a clear focus on ensuring good outcomes for students during the disruption caused by redevelopment work. They have been successful in addressing many of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection and have taken some difficult decisions to address areas of weakness. An extended senior leadership team is in place, but many of its members do not have responsibility for aspects of whole-school improvement and their potential to strengthen the school's capacity is underused. The management of performance and monitoring of effectiveness is variable. Departmental leaders and managers are largely responsible for this aspect of the school's work but approaches are inconsistent and quality is not sufficiently well assured by the senior team. For example, whole-school developments such as the use of assessment to support learning have been introduced but leaders and managers do not have an accurate view of how effectively these strategies are being used across the school to improve students' progress.

Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school based on regular reporting from senior and middle leaders. They are increasingly making informed decisions to shape the future direction of the school and are using individual expertise and skills to good effect. Governors fulfil their statutory duties but need to be more rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses.

A good range of strategies are used to ensure that parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's achievement, well-being and development. However, a few parents and carers felt that the school could provide more guidance on how to help them support their children's learning. Strong partnerships with the local community, other providers and a wide range of external services make a good contribution to ensuring good outcomes for students. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination is satisfactory. There is a determined effort

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to promote antidiscrimination and the 'respect agenda' and curriculum opportunities help to raise students' awareness of cultural and religious diversity. The equality policy is intermittently monitored, but the school's focus on evaluating the achievement and participation of all groups of students is limited. The school is a cohesive community and leaders have a secure understanding of the school's context. Actions taken have contributed well to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but impact on a wider context in relation to promoting community cohesion is yet to be achieved.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The larger than average sixth form is a popular choice with Year 11 students from Richmond School and others from neighbouring institutions. The wide range of academic subjects offered, complemented by a selection of vocational courses, ensures that the sixth form is well placed to meet the needs and aspirations of individual students. The sixth form provides many opportunities for students to take on leadership responsibilities. Many are involved in activities such as sports leadership, supporting Year 7 learning and completing the Duke of Edinburgh award. Pastoral support is good and students appreciate the time and help given by teachers to meet their learning needs. Leadership opportunities and good care, guidance and support ensures that by the time they leave Year 13, students are mature, responsible and articulate young people well prepared for further education or employment. The vast majority of students starting in Year 12 go on to complete their chosen qualifications and, as a result, progression into further education is high.

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Since the last inspection the school has focused on ensuring that teaching provides sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades has increased significantly from being below to being broadly in line with the national average. Students make the most progress relative to their starting points on AS-level programmes and the BTEC course, with good progress in a number of subjects at A level including English literature, mathematics, business studies, geography and physical education. However, outcomes are satisfactory overall, because underperformance remains in a small number of subjects where teaching quality is still too variable.

Management of the sixth form is effective in ensuring smooth running on a day-to-day basis. Nevertheless, leadership is satisfactory because examination performance alone, rather than evidence gathered through a range of monitoring and evaluation strategies, has been used to identify priorities for improvement. Consequently some, but not all, weaknesses in subject performance have been successfully tackled.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Analysis of responses from the questionnaires received indicates that the majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school and happy with their children's school experience. Several gave strong examples of how good care, guidance and support had helped their children overcome significant barriers to learning and success. A few parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour in school. Inspectors were satisfied that behaviour overall is good and that staff are working hard to improve the behaviour of the small minority of students who do not consistently meet the high expectations of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Richmond 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 195 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,580 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	138	36	224	58	16	4	8	2
The school keeps my child safe	120	31	246	63	20	5	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	144	37	222	57	16	4	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	138	36	226	59	14	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	114	30	252	66	10	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	20	248	64	54	14	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	74	19	264	69	36	9	2	1
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)	118	31	240	63	16	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	102	26	260	67	18	5	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	96	25	222	58	42	11	12	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	17	258	70	22	6	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	84	22	262	69	20	5	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	140	36	230	59	10	3	4	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



Inspection of Richmond School, Richmond, DL10 7BQ

Thank you for welcoming us during the recent inspection at your school. We appreciated the time we were able to spend with you talking about your school and the work that you do. Thank you also to those of you who completed the questionnaires to share your views. You told us that most of you enjoy school, particularly the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that are available, and that you feel well cared for and supported by the staff.

Inspectors found that most of you are making good progress because teaching is good and there is a good choice of subjects to meet your needs and aspirations at Key Stage 4. You have responded maturely to the challenges posed by the redevelopment of the school and your positive attitudes contribute to your good learning in lessons.

Senior staff and other school leaders have made some important improvements to the school since it was last inspected. However, we have asked them to focus on two things that will help to ensure that you are all making the best possible progress:

- to make sure that all lessons are well tailored to meet your individual learning needs by using assessment information more effectively
- to improve the systems for checking how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve.

We are sure you will continue to make a good positive contribution to the school and to help support the school's further improvement.

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