

Rossett School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121696
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	340004
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Philip Jarrett 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	1418
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Kilford
Headteacher	Mrs P Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons and held meetings with parents, groups of students, governors and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of other evidence including lesson plans, school policies and assessment data. They also looked at all the questionnaires completed by students and staff, and the 118 questionnaires completed by parents. Year 11 and Year 13 students were not in school during the period of the inspection. Year 12 students were engaged in a week of visits to higher education institutions and talks from external speakers. As a result, no formal lessons in Year 12 were available for observation. All other students were in their final week of lessons within the current programme before moving on to an early start with next year's curriculum.

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

- the impact of recent changes on the quality of provision in the sixth form
- the consistency of students' learning across all key stages and subjects
- the steps taken by the school to improve previously identified areas of weakness
- provision for students whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable.

Information about the school

Rossett School is a very large school that provides for students aged 11-18 from over 40 feeder primary schools. Most students live in Harrogate but around 300 travel to the school from Leeds. It is a specialist school for mathematics and computing. A very large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. There are average numbers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities but few students with a statement of special educational needs. The school provides a wide range of extended services including family learning programmes, community access and an expanding adult education programme. There is a privately-run nursery on the school site. The school has received a number of awards including the International Schools award, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Rossett School has improved substantially since its previous inspection. This is the result of thoughtful leadership, good teaching and outstanding provision in areas such as the curriculum and pastoral care. The school has been very effective in identifying areas of weakness and taking action to improve them. Consequently, attainment is now high across the full range of subjects at the end of Key Stage 4 and the progress made by students is outstanding. Parents acknowledge how the school has improved and the importance of the headteacher's contribution. One parent commented on how the school has, 'developed and grown under her leadership'. There is no complacency about already high standards. The school's leaders have identified appropriate strategies to improve comparative areas of weakness and the headteacher has initiated a debate about how the school might need to change to meet students' developing learning needs in an age of digital technology. This confirms the school's excellent capacity for further improvement.

This is a very large school but staff have created a caring ethos where all students feel valued. In turn, teachers believe that their contribution to the school is valued and that they are fully involved in what the school is trying to achieve. The school is calm and orderly and students feel safe. Relationships with teachers are mostly very strong and students feel they can talk to teachers. Problems are soon resolved. Students say that it is a 'fair' school and that staff listen to their opinions and act on them. The curriculum is flexible and innovative, providing a range of options for students as they move into Key Stage 4. Students are happy with the choices available and with the guidance and support provided.

Students enjoy lessons and do particularly well where teaching is challenging and encourages them to participate actively in learning. They are very keen to learn new things but can become disengaged when lessons fail to challenge or motivate them. Action taken by the school has led to improvements in teaching. This was noted across a number of lessons where, for example, teachers made use of effective strategies for questioning students or encouraging them to reflect on their own learning.

The school acknowledges that provision is not yet as strong in the sixth form as in the main school. However, recent action is leading to improvements. Students are happy in the sixth form and able to play a full part in the school. Achievement is improving and students' progress is currently good. The new sixth form leadership team accepts that improvements are required in extending teaching approaches that meet the needs of sixth form students, improving monitoring and evaluation of their progress, and enhancing the development plan.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision in the sixth form to bring it up to the standard of the rest of the school by:
 - providing guidance for staff on effective teaching in the sixth form
 - strengthening the analysis of data to support and monitor students' progress
 - clarifying priorities and evaluation criteria in the sixth form development plan.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Results at GCSE confirm that standards of attainment are high across the full range of subjects at the end of Key Stage 4 and the school's detailed tracking data suggest that this upward trend is likely to be maintained in the 2010 examinations. These results represent outstanding progress from broadly average starting points on entry to the school. Although girls attain more highly than boys, both groups make equally good progress as do all other groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Learning was good overall in lessons observed during the inspection, reflecting some variability in the quality of teaching. Students are confident, articulate and ambitious to succeed. They concentrate extremely well and when fully engaged, are rarely off-task. They work successfully in groups and show creativity in their work. In a small number of lessons observed, learners were too passive and opportunities to demonstrate independent learning skills were limited.

Students enjoy school. Attendance for the current year is above average and improving. Students say that any bullying is dealt with effectively. They are well aware of e-safety issues and receive good advice on healthy eating. The school offers a range of healthy food options and uptake is good. The strong physical education programme and wide-ranging enrichment activities contribute well to healthy lifestyles. The school also runs a 'drop in centre' and the 'listener scheme', operated by the sixth form, which both support improved mental health.

The school is very orderly and students' behaviour around the large site is very good, showing their respect for other students, staff and visitors. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good except where teaching fails to motivate students. Students have very good levels of basic skills, a strong understanding of personal finance issues, and benefit from the wide range of information and communication technology courses. Students have a strong sense of belonging to the school, and team and community spirit are well developed. Students have a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. The school council plays an active part in school decision making. Students are fully involved in local and national charity work and international links are well developed.

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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall across the school. In lessons observed where teaching was good or outstanding, teachers had confident subject knowledge and formed very good relationships with students. There were clear and effective learning objectives and lessons had challenge and pace with well-managed activities. These lessons were characterised by active and purposeful activities. Teachers had a good understanding of students' current levels of attainment and used this effectively to plan for future learning. Where teaching was not as effective, teachers did not provide enough challenge for students of different ability and information and communication technology was not used effectively enough to support teaching and learning. Most students are well aware of their targets, although feedback from marking remains variable.

The school has developed an innovative curriculum that is creative in its design and helps students to achieve highly. It provides students with a number of flexible pathways and gives good opportunities for early entry across a range of courses. The curriculum is customised to meet the changing needs of groups and individuals. For example, courses have been introduced in response to student demand. The school has been able to extend and improve its curriculum through close partnerships with local schools, colleges and businesses. Students feel very positive about the design and range of subjects in the curriculum. The school also provides a significant programme of well-attended extra-curricular and extended school activities which contribute very well to students' personal development.

The school is very welcoming. A strong ethos of care and support prevails. Pastoral staff

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are diligent in ensuring the consistency of arrangements to care for and support all students, and students appreciate this. Transition arrangements are very effective when students transfer from primary schools as well as when they move to new courses or leave school. Provision for vulnerable students is especially strong. There is good identification of those students who might need extra help. Their progress is monitored well and all staff are regularly updated and kept in touch with developments. Strong mentoring support for identified students leads to very good progress and the specialist 'Bridge' unit is particularly effective in supporting some vulnerable students and enabling them to return to mainstream classes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: 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?

Very effective leadership and management have contributed to substantial improvements since the previous inspection. The headteacher is ambitious for the school and provides reflective and well-informed leadership. She is well supported by the senior leadership team in identifying a clear sense of direction for the school. The school development plan embodies this vision and identifies clearly the key priorities for further improvement, although there is some lack of detail in the range of strategies to drive forward improvements in teaching and assessment. Very good support is provided by a knowledgeable and well-informed governing body. The school demonstrates a thorough approach to safeguarding and there are robust systems in place with good quality assurance. The school takes account of the views of students and parents, and staff are well trained about safeguarding issues. The specialist status of the school has contributed to higher standards in mathematics and information and communication technology. It has stimulated good partnership work with local feeder schools.

Overall, there is a very strong learning ethos within the school with an emphasis on promoting and celebrating success for all. Many parents and students spoke about the inclusive nature of the school and its successful efforts to prepare students for the world beyond school. One parent wrote that 'the school works well to promote tolerance and understanding of different cultural traditions'. This is shown in good quality work on identifying the needs of the local community and implementing a range of actions that make an effective contribution to community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Provision in the sixth form has improved as a result of recent action, although it is not yet as strong as in the main school. There is an open admissions policy into the sixth form and this means that attainment on entry is broadly average but with some students beginning courses with comparatively low levels of attainment. Current rates of progress are good and the school's monitoring data suggest that achievement is improving. Nearly all Year 13 students continue on to higher education or secure employment. Discussion with students and evidence from their work show that teaching and learning are good, although not always directly focused on the particular learning needs of sixth form study. Students enjoy their lessons and develop the skills of independent learning. The curriculum is good and recent developments ensure that it meets students' needs well. There is an extensive range of enrichment opportunities which helps to enhance students' leadership skills and to become involved in the life of the school and the wider community. Clear actions taken by the new sixth form leadership have had a positive impact on outcomes and the quality of provision. However, there are currently comparative weaknesses in the analysis and monitoring of performance data and the clarity and range of the development plan.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The comparatively small number of questionnaires completed no doubt partly reflects the fact that significant numbers of students were not in attendance during the week of the inspection. A very large majority of those parents and carers who responded expressed views that were wholly positive about the school. A few parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour or bullying but this was not confirmed by any evidence during the inspection. Parents wrote about being proud to send their children to the school and how they considered that students were all valued equally. Parents especially praised the opportunities for students to contribute to the extensive enrichment programme. Many also wrote about the impact of the school on their child's self-confidence and personal development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rossett 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 118 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1418 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	46	57	48	4	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	60	51	52	44	6	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	60	51	53	45	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	52	51	43	5	4	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	53	45	57	48	6	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	39	61	52	8	7	3	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	34	67	57	10	8	0	0
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)	54	46	57	48	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	48	54	46	5	4	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	46	52	44	10	8	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	38	59	50	9	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	64	54	49	42	2	2	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	68	58	41	35	7	6	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.



25 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Rossett School, Harrogate, HG2 9JP

The inspection team was very pleased to meet so many of you during our recent inspection. We were very impressed with your confidence and the thoughtful ideas you shared with us. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe. You said that behaviour is mostly good and that when there is any misbehaviour or bullying, the staff deal with it very quickly. You also said that the school is a welcoming and happy place and that you all feel included and valued. You especially enjoy all the extra-curricular activities, for instance in sport and the performing arts.

In general, you all spoke very highly of the school. We agree with you and we rated the school as outstanding. So, well done to all the students and staff! The headteacher and other senior leaders provide very good leadership and are ambitious for the school to do even better. The curriculum is planned very well to meet your needs and it enables you to choose the subjects you want to follow as well as doing some GCSEs early. Standards are high and have improved in recent years. Students make excellent progress.

Teaching is good across the school.

The school has improved a lot. This includes the sixth form where students' achievement is now good. However, we agree with the senior leaders that the sixth form is not yet as strong as the rest of the school and we have suggested a number of areas that the school should try to improve:

- Teaching across all subjects so that it meets the needs of sixth form study better.
- Tracking the progress of students more effectively.
- Improving the sixth form action plan.

Once again, thank you for speaking so openly with us when we visited the school.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Jarrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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