

Rushcliffe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122860
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	340233
Inspection dates	7–8 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1405
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Marson
Headteacher	Mr Robert Gullis
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 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 42 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and students and held telephone conversations with a representative of the governing body and a headteacher from a primary school. They observed the school's work, and looked at school records and policy documents. They analysed the questionnaires from staff, students and the 307 received from parents.

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

- The achievement of groups of pupils identified at the last inspection as making slower progress than others
- The quality of teaching and in particular the way teachers use assessment to adjust the lesson activities to meet the needs of all pupils
- The impact of recent changes to the curriculum on the outcomes for all groups of pupils
- How effectively leaders at all levels ensure that achievement continues to improve

Information about the school

Rushcliffe School is a larger than average school, occupying a single site alongside Rushcliffe Leisure Centre in the West Bridgford suburb of Nottingham. The school draws its pupils from an area that includes the inner city as well as the districts and villages on the south side of the city. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. An average number of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are fewer than average for whom English is an additional language. The school has been a specialist science college with mathematics since September 2007 and is a Training School. The school has received several awards including the Healthy Schools gold standard award and the International School award.

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

2

Main findings

Senior leaders in the school have instigated a determined drive to raise achievement in the last two years. New appointments to the senior team and to important posts at curriculum leader level have strengthened this drive. This has resulted in a sharp rise in standards at all levels in 2009 and the school achieved its best ever results in GCSE examinations. Progress for all groups of pupils has improved. The progress of those groups that was satisfactory is now good. Pupils who need additional help with their learning no longer make inadequate progress. Strengths in staff training developed through the school's status as a Training School have helped leaders to share the expertise in the specialist subjects of science and mathematics across the school. This can be seen in the improvements in English results that stemmed from collaborative working with the specialist departments. Teaching is good but sometimes teachers fail to check the progress individuals are making in the lesson. The work fails to engage some pupils and the pace of their learning slows.

Self-evaluation is accurate and effective, enabling the school to meet challenging targets. Work underway on the use of assessment to support learning is resulting in greater consistency across the school in this aspect of teaching. Improved systems for collecting data on pupils' progress are enabling the school to target support more accurately. The school has developed good systems to support the transition from primary school and parents and carers are appreciative of the communication they receive during this process. There are satisfactory systems for communicating with them on the progress their children are making as they move through the school and there are some strategies to help them support their child's learning. The pattern of improvement indicates the school has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress of all groups in lessons by:
 - expanding the range of assessment strategies used by teachers
 - ensuring teachers check the learning of individual pupils as the lesson proceeds and adjust their teaching when necessary.
- Strengthen further the links with parents and carers by actively promoting communication and increasing the strategies available to help them support their child's learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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The large majority of pupils learn successfully and make good progress from above average starting points on entry to the school. Consequently, by age 16 most attain standards that are significantly above average. Progress in lessons is good. There is some variation between the progress of different groups. In the last two years, boys generally made better progress than girls, but girls reached higher standards than boys in GCSE examinations. The progress of pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The school's thorough tracking of pupils' current performance indicates progress is continuing to improve.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to live safe and healthy lives, and the very large majority confidently put their understanding into practice. Pupils show respect for others and demonstrate a proper sense of moral and social responsibility. A small minority of parents do not consider behaviour to be good, but their views were not endorsed significantly by the inspection. Pupils are generally sensitive to the range of cultural backgrounds present in school and relationships are usually harmonious. They grow into thoughtful individuals with a social conscience, shown, for example, in enthusiastic fund-raising for charities. They enjoy the well-established links with a school in Goa and show a wider sense of community responsibility.

All students gain confidence in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and use of information and communication technology (ICT). They apply these successfully in work-related activities, for example, in vocational courses and experience of the workplace, to equip them well for continued education and working life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

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	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2 2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to plan lessons that are well structured with a range of activities designed to build on prior experiences and provide suitable challenge for a range of abilities. As a result, pupils are engaged in the lessons and, supported by good relationships and a good climate for learning, most make good progress.

Most lessons proceed at a good pace. Good use is made of ICT to support learning, in particular the use made of interactive whiteboards or data projectors to make lessons more engaging. In some lessons, teachers do not check in sufficient detail the progress that individuals are making and fail to adjust their teaching. Some pupils remain passive for too long and a very small minority of pupils become distracted. Whilst their behaviour does not distract others, their own progress is reduced. Teaching assistants are well trained and used effectively both in lessons and to support those pupils withdrawn for more intensive support. Teachers regularly share with pupils the requirements for different grades and levels of attainment and encourage them to assess their own and their fellow pupils' work. They do not always share, with the pupils, detailed information on how they should improve their work. This includes through marking, which is variable across the school in both quantity and quality.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It has been extended recently through increased collaboration with a local college and partner schools including a special school. This is being developed further to enhance progression routes from ages 14 to 19. Enrichment activities are highly regarded by pupils, the range is good and the uptake of some of them is very high. There are many opportunities across the curriculum for pupils to develop their basic skills.

The pupil support unit is very effective and demonstrates the school's commitment to listening to pupils' concerns and responding to them. Pupils feel safe and know there is someone to turn to if they need help. The work of the unit has been particularly effective in improving attendance. Pupils are guided well at all transition points. Careers guidance is good. There is an extensive programme starting in Year 7 and information is available from many sources which are easily accessible to the pupils.

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
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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	
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Strategies for improving achievement for all groups of learners are now embedded at all levels of management in the school. The school sets itself challenging targets and closely monitors progress towards them. As a result, all groups of pupils are making more rapid progress and standards are continuing to rise. Very effective tracking systems allow the school to gather data on the way pupils are progressing and then use the analysis of these data to improve the provision. This feeds into the self-evaluation processes and enables the school to identify accurately the priorities in the school development plan. Regular monitoring of teaching by senior leaders and leaders of the different subjects means the school has a very accurate view of where the strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie. There is a good system in place to support the sharing of the best practice in the school through coaching and professional development programmes. The school uses its specialist status effectively to support other schools in the area.

Governors challenge and support the school well. There is a good mix of skills and experience within the governing body, although governors recognise that it needs to be more representative of the school population at large.

The progress of all groups of pupils is carefully monitored. The thoughts and ideas of minority ethnic groups are considered and this has led to changes to aspects of the school's provision. The recently established 'Wise Up' days are helping pupils to gain a better understanding of and respect for differences and a growing understanding of equality around the world. The school is working hard to ensure all parents have ease of access to school information.

The school has firmly established partnerships with other providers to enhance the provision. Systems and routines for safeguarding are well-established and understood by all. Policies are clear and helpful advice and guidance are issued to all staff.

The school has a good understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the school community. The contribution it makes to the local community is strong. Through its work as an International school and the links with schools overseas, it is fostering the global aspect of this work well. Increasingly, work on different faiths is being built into the curriculum.

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	2

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

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
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	2

Sixth form

The vast majority of students in the sixth form reach the challenging targets set for them. They make good progress and reach above average standards. Almost all go on to higher education and the number who do not enter employment, education or training is extremely low. Students contribute well to the work of the school by acting as mentors and helping in different curriculum areas. Tutorial support is well organised and makes a good contribution to the students' academic progress and personal development. Teachers have good subject knowledge and progress in lessons is good, being supported by the good relationships and attention to students' individual needs. The curriculum provides a wide range of courses and there is a high take-up of the specialist subjects at GCE A level. The partnership working with a consortium of schools ensures the school can provide a wide range of vocational and other courses alongside GCE A and AS level. New leadership of the sixth form demonstrates a clear agenda for further improvement and an accurate view of the priorities. Rising numbers of students and improving examination results indicate the success of the provision.

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 parents' responses were very supportive of the school. Praise was given for the

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quality of the work in supporting pupils' transition from primary to secondary school. A very small minority were concerned that there was a problem with bullying or poor behaviour, but the inspectors found no evidence of this. Either through their responses to specific questions or from the comments they added to the questionnaires, it was clear that a small minority of parents would appreciate more detailed information on their child's progress or more help with supporting their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rushcliffe 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 inspector received 307 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1405 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	36	179	58	12	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	92	30	203	66	6	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	97	32	174	57	17	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	98	32	180	59	7	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	75	25	203	67	6	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	23	188	62	26	9	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	21	199	65	28	9	4	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)	89	29	180	59	11	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	79	26	193	63	11	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	18	182	60	34	11	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	18	185	61	33	11	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	88	29	187	61	7	2	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	115	47	115	47	8	3	0	0

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.



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of Rushcliffe School, West Bridgford, NG2 7BW

On behalf of all the inspectors who visited your school this week, I want to thank you for the way you helped us in this inspection. Your honest and mature comments were most useful in helping us to reach our conclusions about the school.

We found that your school has improved since the last inspection and is now good. You impressed us with your behaviour in lessons. You told us how you appreciate the many opportunities the school provides for you to follow courses that meet your individual needs and to pursue sporting and other activities after school. The grades you attain in GCSE examinations are high and have been rising each year. The progress you make is good and has improved, especially those of you who need additional help with your learning who now make satisfactory progress.

You said you feel safe at school and the Pupil Support Unit is highly valued. Your teachers provide you with a good range of activities in lessons and this contributes to your good progress.

The school's specialist status in science with mathematics is having a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work. We were particularly impressed by the way the teachers in those subjects share their expertise with other departments.

It is good to note how many of you are choosing to stay on after Year 11 and the number of you who then find work with training or a place at college or university is above average.

We have asked the school to address some key issues in order to increase your achievement further. These include:

ensuring teachers check during the lessons how well you are doing and adjust the lessons accordingly

finding ways of sharing information on your progress with your parents in more detail and helping them to support you with your learning.

With my very best wishes for your success in the future

Yours faithfully

Elaine Taylor HMI

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