

Rodborough Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125260
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340749
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	903
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Whitfield
Headteacher	Mr A C Smith
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 41 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's development plan, its self-review, analyses of the attainment and progress of its pupils, records of lesson observations, policies, staff training records and 316 parental questionnaires.

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

- how the school ensures that all groups of pupils make appropriate progress in each year group, and the extent of the progress made
- how pupils' attitudes and their behaviour contribute to their own progress and that of others
- how the school involves parents and carers in the work of the school
- the quality of the school's work to secure better social cohesion in its own community and in the locality.

Information about the school

Rodborough, formerly known as Rodborough Technology College, is an average sized secondary school with a specialism in technology, serving Godalming and surrounding villages. The proportion of pupils at the school from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The school's population reflects the relatively advantaged nature of its locality. It holds the Healthy School and the School Eco Silver awards. There is a nursery on the school site, but because it is not managed by the school's governing body it is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

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

- Rodborough provides an outstanding education for its pupils.
- The headteacher provides a clear vision for the school and he drives improvement resolutely and with the best interests of the pupils in mind.
- The school's outstanding leadership and management, and its strong track record of improvement, give the school an outstanding capacity to maintain those aspects of its work that are already exceptional, and to improve others to this high level.
- Pupils' achievement and several other key outcomes are outstanding. No outcomes for pupils are less than good.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they clearly enjoy being at school and all that it offers them. Their positive attitude and maturity are very significant factors in their outstanding achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good and results in pupils making good progress over both key stages.
- The curriculum is outstanding because it gives pupils the opportunity to excel in ways appropriate to their individual strengths and interests.
- Pupils are quite passive learners in lessons. They engage with the good teaching well but they are given few opportunities to steer the learning, or to develop their own ideas to any great extent beyond those anticipated in the lesson planning.
- The school provides a very high level of care, advice and guidance for groups of pupils and for individuals by working very closely with a range of outside agencies and adopting a flexible and responsive structure to provide for the wide range of needs in the school. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities really flourish, both personally and academically.
- The school works well with parents. It seeks their views about a range of issues and acts on the information obtained to improve provision.
- The school community has a great sense of cohesion and unity of purpose. This has come about over recent years because the school saw the need to improve in this respect and rose to the challenge successfully.
- Pupils give generously of their time and talents in supporting the local community. The school's thorough knowledge of the needs of its locality, and its understanding of how to meet them, underpin a clear and successful focus on improving its community cohesion.
- The degree of parental satisfaction with the work of the school is very high. One parent summed this up by saying, 'I don't think I could ask for a better, more rounded education for my children.'

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure outstanding progress for all groups of pupils by summer 2012 by bringing about further improvements in the quality of teaching. This will involve:
 - introducing a wider range of teaching styles to stimulate more active participation from pupils in lessons and a greater capacity for their ideas and contributions to drive the learning forward
 - accelerating the pace of development of the Thinking Skills initiative so that significant elements of good practice are applied consistently and to good effect across all subjects
 - enabling pupils to understand precisely what their next steps for improvement are, and how to achieve them, so that teachers can assist pupils to manage their own learning with more confidence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils work attentively in lessons and engage very positively with the teaching. They show ambition and enjoyment of their learning, and there is a palpable sense of pride in the progress made. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the very good targeted support they receive. Pupils' strong information and communication technology (ICT) skills support their work in other subjects very well. The school sets appropriately demanding targets and pupils usually meet them. Specialist subject targets are met most consistently in design and technology. Even in the best lessons pupils are rarely encouraged to make significant contributions that influence the pace and direction of the learning.

Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because they know that it is a well-disciplined community. They are confident that staff will take their concerns seriously and that action will be taken to address any issues that arise. There is a sense of mutual respect between staff and pupils, based on a sense of trust. Behaviour around the site and in lessons is exemplary. Visitors are greeted in a confident, warm and mature manner. Pupils treat each other with respect and kindness and show very well-developed social skills and a keen sense of what is right and fair. Instances of bullying are rare and any issues stem almost exclusively from the natural ups and downs of teenage relationships. The range of pupils' contributions to the school community is impressive. The various types of prefects all take their responsibilities very seriously and they have a very positive impact on the day-to-day life and work of the school. Pupils value the opportunities given to them to share aspects of the leadership of their school and to shape its future.

This willingness on the part of pupils to contribute results in good work being undertaken in the local community. For example, pupils help in local primary schools as sports leaders, in the local care home and day centre, and have assisted with exhibitions at the town's museum celebrating the history of the school and its links to the Canadian air force base. Pupils actively support a range of local and international charities. They

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are making a significant contribution to developing sustainability in the area, as an aspect of the school's specialist work, through joint initiatives with local residents and the local council.

Pupils demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Many translate this into practice, including healthy eating; pupils made an important contribution to the menu planning in the school's dining facility 'The Capital' when it opened recently. The extent of active participation in the many sporting opportunities at the school is impressive. Pupils' cultural development is good because of their willingness to play a part in the wide range of performing arts opportunities on offer in and beyond the curriculum. One pupil in Year 10 said, 'There's no shortage of things to do and to get involved in here; you'd have to try hard to be bored.'

' Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection and it is now good. The proportion who are persistently absent is small and is reducing because of the way that the school is providing for their needs better. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives by their experiences at school. They leave with a broad range of important skills and they are confident to apply them in new situations. Many go on to further and higher education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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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How effective is the provision?

Teachers' knowledge and love of their subject are evident and they obviously enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with pupils. The systems that record the attainment and progress of pupils are used to good effect by teachers in their planning for groups and individuals, but opportunities are missed to capitalise on the significant potential of pupils by, for example, encouraging them to generate exciting questions of their own, and new lines of enquiry. Pupils' work is often marked thoroughly and carefully, with clear indications of how it may be developed, but this is not consistent across departments.

The school works with a wide range of partners in Key Stage 4 to deliver a broad range of opportunities across several local schools and colleges. The school has taken an active role in its local federation and wider confederation and there have been clear gains for pupils, including exciting opportunities for the more able in the Godalming Enrichment Programme. There have also been imaginative and effective adaptations to the curriculum in the lower school, centred on the well-considered application and development of the Leading in Learning strategy and the Thinking Skills project. The specialist subjects have each taken a lead in various developments, including the use of ICT in the school and the use of performance data in evaluating schemes of work. There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular opportunities, including a large number of educational visits organised in many subject areas.

' The school works with a wide range of support agencies to respond to individuals' needs, and this liaison work is very effective. Sometimes it involves innovative approaches to staffing, such as the temporary attachment of two trainee social workers to the staff of the school. The STAR project is an imaginative and effective response to meeting pupils' needs and it provides vital support for the relatively small number who may face significant challenges to their educational progress and continuity, and general welfare. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided for pupils were demonstrated clearly when the school sought the help of governors to provide for the physical education needs of a small group of students with disabilities, through the establishment of a separate facility in the school.

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?

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The headteacher demonstrates a clear commitment to secure the highest quality outcomes for all pupils. The clarity of vision from him and his senior staff is matched by the quality of the support given to staff to bring about improvements and maintain standards, where they are already outstanding. Senior leaders know the many strengths of their school well and they are celebrated appropriately, and there is a passion for continued improvement. Monitoring is rigorous and the systems to track pupils' progress are used very effectively at all levels in the school. Over the last three years the quality of teaching has improved as a result of the school's programme of high quality professional development and its close monitoring. Senior staff know exactly what needs to be done to make teaching outstanding so that the progress that pupils make can be improved further, and recognise that this will involve ensuring that certain teaching strategies are further developed, and applied consistently across the school.

Governors' contribution to the work of the school is very significant in both strategic and practical ways. They regularly hold the senior team to account for driving improvement on the basis of a thorough knowledge and understanding of the school's priorities, the expectations of parents, and robust monitoring of the progress of issues on the development plan. Governors willingly bring their considerable individual expertise to the service of the school and contribute to establishing and maintaining its strong ethos and high morale, and ensure that it achieves outstanding value for money. The school values its good links with parents and seeks to involve them in evaluating developments, maintaining regular contact via text messages and the regularly updated website, and providing invitations to information evenings covering topics such as using the school's online managed learning environment to support their child's learning. It does not involve parents often in the early stages of planning key developments.

' The school has improved its own sense of community coherence significantly over recent years, and it has a very keen sense of its role in doing so in its locality. It works with a range of agencies to audit and coordinate provision, and opportunities to make a difference are identified accurately. The school is a very safe environment and there are high quality systems in place to protect the well-being of children. It places considerable emphasis on ensuring that all pupils feel equally valued while maintaining a sense of their own individuality and cultural identity, and it accomplishes this to an impressive extent. As a consequence of the school's careful balance of strong ambition and the close support given to groups and individuals, morale is high amongst pupils and staff. Success is celebrated and there is a real sense of the school continuing to move forward confidently. There is a strong positive trajectory in all key aspects of its work; it has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1

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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	1
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

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires returned by parents show that a very large majority are happy with their child's experience at the school. They feel that teaching at the school is good, that children are prepared well for their future, and that the school keeps their child safe. Many responses directly attributed these strengths to the high quality of the leadership of the school. Parental views also concurred with those of the inspection team about the outstanding behaviour of pupils. Concerns, when expressed, did not follow any overall pattern or trend but a very small minority felt that some aspects of communication with the school could be better. Other comments, however, recognised improvements evident in this area.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 316 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 903 pupils registered at the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rodborough 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	119	38	176	56	14	4	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	118	37	189	60	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	74	23	198	63	35	11	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	95	30	188	59	18	6	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	76	24	218	69	8	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	16	207	66	42	13	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	21	203	64	30	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)	85	27	184	58	10	3	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	27	194	61	23	7	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	26	195	62	19	6	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	20	187	59	22	7	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	125	40	170	54	9	3	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	127	40	171	54	11	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.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Rodborough, Godalming GU8 5BZ

Thank you for the warm welcome you showed me and my inspection team during our visit to your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and learning about the work of your school. After examining all aspects of the work of the school we concluded that it is providing you with an outstanding education.

We were very impressed with much of what we saw, but I want to highlight your extremely mature and thoughtful behaviour and the way that you care and look after each other as very significant factors in your very high levels of achievement. You make good academic progress over your time at the school, and you feel very safe and enjoy your education because of the consistently good teaching we saw, the excellent curriculum and the extremely high quality of care, advice and guidance provided.

The school has very good systems in place to ensure your safety and well-being and it prepares you very well for the next stages of your education, beyond 16. It gives you many ways of being involved in a range of activities beyond lessons, including music, sport, school productions, visits and activities in your local community.

Your headteacher was delighted when we informed him of our judgements, but he also demonstrated that he has every intention of working with the governors and the staff to make things even better for you. We agreed that while teaching is good, if it were better in certain ways you could make outstanding progress. For example, we saw many of you obviously working hard and very willingly in lessons, but not playing a very active role in your learning. I have asked the headteacher to consider how introducing a wider range of teaching styles can help you to use your ideas and contributions to drive the learning forward in lessons. He will also consider how he can ensure that some teaching and learning techniques are used more consistently across all subjects. Finally, I would like you and your teachers to reflect on how you can arrive at a precise enough understanding of your next steps for improvement, and how to achieve them, so that you can manage your own learning with more confidence, and depend less on teachers doing this for you.

I would like to extend my best wishes for your continued happiness and success at Rodborough, and beyond.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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