



Rugby High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125769
LEA Warwickshire
Inspection number 281996
Inspection dates 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006
Reporting inspector Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Longrood Road
School category	Foundation		Rugby
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Warwickshire CV22 7RE
Gender of pupils	Girls	Telephone number	01788 810518
Number on roll	733	Fax number	01788 811794
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Julian Hall
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Shelagh Moore

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	1 February 2006 - 2 February 2006	281996

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school serves the community of Rugby and its surrounding area, and gained Science Specialist College status in 2004. Students come from a range of social and economic backgrounds. The sixth form is not selective and admits nearly 50% of its students from other schools and collaborates with the local boys' grammar school to widen the range of courses available. The previous headteacher retired in December 2005 and two acting headteachers are in post until the headteacher designate takes up post in April 2006.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Rugby High School is an outstanding school, a view shared by parents and reflected in the school's self-evaluation. Students achieve very high standards and make good progress in the main school and outstanding progress in the sixth form. The pastoral support, personal development and well-being, and the care, guidance and support provided for students are also outstanding. The curriculum is exceptional and extra-curricular provision is very rich, with a wealth of activities which include leadership opportunities for all students. All the girls are treated as individuals and develop into self-assured, confident young women. The overall quality of teaching is good and further development will raise it to that of the best.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection, especially in the way it supports students experiencing barriers to their learning. The school is well led and managed. The two acting headteachers and the senior management team are committed to further improvement, and are building on the legacy of the previous headteacher. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Senior staff understand the school's strengths, and its areas for further development, such as improving the process for monitoring teaching and sharpening their self-evaluation procedures. Science College status has had a very positive impact on the life of the school and has acted as a catalyst for whole school improvement. The school is well placed to continue its development and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

A combination of consistently good teaching, a relevant and challenging curriculum, and outstanding personal guidance and support mean that, overall, sixth form students make outstanding progress in this exceptional sixth form. Excellent collaboration with the local boys' grammar school provides a wide range of AS and A level courses. The arrangements for setting and checking personal targets ensure that progress is carefully checked and support can be provided at an early stage where needed. Similarly, the joint arrangements run very effectively because of the very high expectation of attendance, effective inter-school travel and registration arrangements, and excellent transfer of information between the schools. Students take on considerable responsibilities, including mentoring younger students in mathematics and supporting tutor groups in Years 7 to 11. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The main strengths are the very strong leadership and the relationships with the staff and students of the local boys' grammar school. The school's own evaluation of the sixth form matches that of inspectors and supports development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Devise a robust system to regularly monitor the quality of teaching and inform whole school action planning.
- Refine the self-evaluation strategies at all management levels to increase rigour.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students reach high standards by the time they leave the school and the majority gain five or more of the highest grades at GCSE and three or more top A level grades. This places the school among the best-performing grammar schools in the country. Standards in science are particularly high and reflect the school's specialist status well.

Students join the school with well above average standards and generally challenging teaching means they make good progress in Years 7 to 9, leading to high standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9, particularly in science and mathematics. A dip in English results in 2004 and 2005 has been investigated thoroughly and changes implemented to bring English back to match the other core subjects. Students continue to make good progress through Years 10 and 11. The school does particularly well for students who enter the school with close to average standards and those with special educational needs. The support they receive enables them to achieve results on a par with those of other students.

Students' progress in the sixth form is outstanding, largely because of the exceptional progress made by students joining the school at 16 from elsewhere, consistently challenging teaching, and the rigorous approach to checking progress.

A particular strength throughout the school is students' oral contribution to lessons, where they are able to deal with issues at a high conceptual level and communicate their views at length and convincingly. Students' written work across the curriculum is similarly strong and is often creative in approach.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students feel safe and well cared for. Levels of attendance are high. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. They have a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and respond well to their fellow students and other adults. They regularly show their concern for others through the significant amounts they raise for charities, and in exploring ethical issues in religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their understanding of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups within society.

Almost all students have positive attitudes at school. Therefore, behaviour in the lessons and around school is outstanding. Students appreciate the reward systems, which celebrate individual achievement. When students have concerns, they feel comfortable about approaching a member of staff, knowing they will be taken seriously and treated fairly. Students like the prefect system, which provides them with senior students to whom they feel comfortable in reporting incidents. The school takes account of students' views through the workings of an effective school council.

Students are aware of the need to adopt healthier lifestyles and have been responsible for the introduction of some healthier options in the school dining hall.

Many students enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being school prefects, managing charity events and acting as mentors to other students and pupils in local primary schools. Students make an outstanding contribution to the wider community, for example through the Year 8 Community Challenge, where classes plan their own work to help people in the local area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. During the inspection, several outstanding lessons were seen, and a few that were satisfactory. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers plan lessons carefully to take account of the abilities and aptitudes of their students and assess work frequently and accurately. Consequently, students enjoy learning and take a pride in their work. Typical lessons have brisk starting activities that introduce clear learning objectives and move on to appropriate activities. These include lively class discussion or practical work, the making of useful and accurate notes, and a succinct summing up of what has been learned. Older students comment that lessons have become more interesting and their learning has been enriched by the skilful use of interactive whiteboards that have been provided recently in most classrooms as a result of the school's specialist status. Occasionally, teachers are less clear about what they want students to learn and then the lessons lose their sense of purpose, and students' responses, usually profound, become less considered. Generally, students are challenged to think hard and deeply.

For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students were asked to draw a representative sketch of a character from Macbeth. One depicted Macbeth as a cracked wall that would crumble under Lady Macbeth's pressure.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is appropriate for the school, meets statutory requirements, and is outstanding overall. Within a clearly academic programme, students study a wide range of modern and classical languages, separate or combined sciences, and a good range of humanities and fine arts. In the sixth form, the range is extended through the very effective link with the local boys' grammar school. The extra-curricular provision is of a range and high quality rarely seen and enables students to assume responsibility, take part in music, drama and sport, travel abroad to study and learn, and to serve the wider community through, for example, ecology projects and Amnesty International. The take-up of these opportunities is outstanding; very few students fail to benefit from the enrichment available, and their resulting confidence and initiative are evident

from the youngest to the oldest. Students are enabled to successfully develop their business and enterprise skills through a range of activities and work experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school is outstanding in the way it cares for and guides its students. The sensitive operation of the school's guidance procedures enables every student to be known and their individual needs met, whether these are academic or personal. Enrichment for students with particular gifts and talents is exceptional and open to all. Students with special educational needs are very well supported. Departments monitor students' progress well and set and check suitable targets. The school is safe and students are appropriately supervised at all times. Healthy food is provided and students have responded cheerfully to the replacement of fizzy drinks by drinking water. Child protection measures are clear and all staff trained. Students themselves discourage bullying which, when it does occur, amounts to occasional name-calling.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The overall quality of leadership and management across the school is good, with some outstanding features. Management of the sixth form is outstanding. The acting headteachers are leading the school well and have a clear direction for their work. They are instrumental in ensuring the school meets its objectives as a specialist school. The senior management team knows the school's strengths and areas for development and has made a good start to the process of self-evaluation with middle managers, but evaluation lacks consistent clarity of judgement in written documentation. For example, the senior staff know the overall quality of the teaching in the school, but the monitoring of teaching itself is not sufficiently regular, or robust in its outcomes, to inform whole school training needs.

Leadership opportunities are extensive throughout the school. Students take on posts of responsibility in all year groups, but notably in the sixth form. Some identified with low self-esteem gain tremendous confidence through working with pupils at neighbouring primary and infant schools by supporting reading and other activities. Non-teaching staff, for example the headteacher's personal assistant, the receptionist and the senior lunchtime supervisor, have also developed significant leadership roles. They know the students well and make their contribution to the outstanding care and support provided for individuals.

Parents are consulted about the school's development and are very positive about the way the school caters for individual students academically and socially. They appreciate the good communication systems, especially the regular weekly e-mailed newsletter, and the significance that the school places on students giving something back to their school and local community. Parents have seen their daughters grow in confidence.

Other professional organisations involved with the school also hold the school in very high esteem.

Governance is good. Governors are knowledgeable and very supportive of the school. They regularly come into school to support its activities and hold the school to account for the standards it achieves. They are aware that the school does not currently meet statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

There is a strong commitment to the continuing professional development of teaching and non-teaching staff. Bursaries are offered to finance longer training courses, for example a drama teacher attended a one-week course with the Royal Shakespeare Company and another was provided with funding towards a Master of Arts (MA) course.

The school monitors the use of funding effectively and secures good value for money. Resources are efficiently deployed and recent building work has significantly improved the sixth form, drama and physical education facilities. There are appropriate plans to develop the poor dining facilities in the school.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Students

I am writing to thank you all for the warm and courteous welcome you gave me and my team when we visited Rugby High School for the recent inspection. I thought you would like to know our impressions of your school and how we felt it could improve even further.

- We and your parents felt that you attend an outstanding school that not only develops your academic skills, but also your social skills, with equal emphasis. You all grow into confident, articulate young women.
- We were very impressed with the way so many of you take on leadership roles, such as mentors, form captains, prefects, and members of various committees.
- The large amount of charity work you do helps you to use your skills and talents for the benefit of others.
- A large number of you take the opportunity to attend extra curricular activities that develop other aspects of your personality.
- You work hard and achieve high standards.
- Your teachers work hard to prepare work that stimulates you.
- The senior management team leads the school well and is committed to helping you achieve your full potential.

In order to make the school even better, we have asked the staff at your school to:

- ensure that all your lessons are equally challenging and enjoyable
- develop more self-evaluation strategies throughout the school.

Yours faithfully

Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools