

Raynes Park High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102674
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	308088
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs L Hanmer
Headteacher	Mr I Newman
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Bushey Road London SW20 0JL
Telephone number	020 8946 4112
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, currently on secondment to Her Majesty's Inspectorate, and four Additional Inspectors. This inspection was subject to a quality assurance visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Raynes Park High School is an above average sized secondary school, serving all areas of Merton. There are significantly more boys than girls. Students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds with just over half the students of White British origin with about one fifth speaking English as an additional language. There are 74 refugee or asylum seeker students. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than in most schools with considerable variation between year groups. An average number of students are eligible for free school meals. The school has a specialist unit for 20 students with autistic spectrum disorder, called the Access Centre.

The school gained specialist technology status in 2002 and re-designation in 2007. The school has achieved a number of awards including Investor in People, Football Association Chartermark and National Autistic Society accreditation.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students in a caring and inclusive environment. Students are proud of their school. They enjoy school life, and the wide variety of activities offered, particularly in sport and the environment. They benefit from a good curriculum, which is increasingly well matched to their needs and from the excellent information and communication technology (ICT) resources.

Achievement across the school is now satisfactory although in the recent past it has not been. In 2007, Key Stage 3 results improved, particularly in English and mathematics, although they were still below the national average overall. Students' progress was satisfactory except in science. Results at GCSE, in 2007, were below those found nationally and represented poor progress for many students in a number of subjects. The school has identified the areas of underachievement, particularly at Key Stage 4, and they are successfully addressing them with determination. More effective use of performance data is enabling the school to regularly track and monitor students' progress and tackle both individual students' underachievement and subject underperformance. Because of this, and the improvements in teaching and learning, students are on track to achieve more challenging targets set by the school for 2008 and their progress is now satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make at least satisfactory progress because individual students are very well supported by the Learning Development Department, Access Centre and Student Support Centre staff.

Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, and has many strengths, there are still some inconsistencies. In the less successful lessons, learning objectives are not clearly defined, task explanations lack clarity or activities insufficiently motivate or challenge students to fully engage them in their learning. As a result some students make less than expected progress. Assessment and marking are not used consistently to provide students with clear feedback on how to move onto the next steps of their learning. Good care, support and guidance ensure students feel secure. Vulnerable students are identified quickly and very good systems are in place to support them. There is little bullying within the school and students say it is dealt with effectively when it occurs. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good, while opportunities for spiritual reflection are satisfactory.

The school is working to improve attendance and punctuality, which is just below the national average. Behaviour is satisfactory although there is some low level disruption in lessons where teaching is less effective. Students have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and how to stay safe. Students make a good contribution to the school community. They are particularly active in sport. For example, football teams have taken part successfully in local and international tournaments with the Year 8, 9 and 10 teams winning local league titles. Students develop sound basic skills, particularly in mathematics and ICT, and they receive good support for transition to post 16 courses or employment.

A very small minority of parents responded to the inspection parental questionnaire. Most of these were positive about the school but a few raised concerns over behaviour in lessons. However, during the inspection behaviour seen in lessons was satisfactory.

The headteacher is highly committed to the school and with the restructured senior leadership team has now developed a clear strategic focus on raising standards and student achievement. Self-evaluation has improved and the school has an accurate view of its current position. However, whilst the school has put in place a series of strategies and actions to address

inconsistency in teaching and the underachievement of many students, analysis of their impact is insufficiently systematic or rigorous to fully sustain improvement. Senior leaders are increasingly active in developing middle managers to drive improvement and take responsibility to raise standards in their own areas. Although progress from the last inspection has been slow, there are now clear signs of positive impact indicating that the capacity for improvement is now strengthening and is satisfactory.

Staff, students and parents justifiably hold the Access Centre in high esteem. Students are very well supported both within this excellent centre and in mainstream lessons through knowledgeable and caring staff, good liaison with subject teachers and special provision. For example, in physical education (PE) they can participate in archery in place of team games that they find difficult to access. Students make at least satisfactory progress, with many achieving academic qualifications in line with their abilities.

The schools technology specialism includes four subjects and whilst standards by the end of Key Stage 4 in mathematics and ICT are satisfactory, this is not yet reflected in science and design and technology. The school has focused the impact of specialist status more on provision than outcomes. For example, the provision of excellent ICT facilities throughout the school, separate sciences as an option at Key Stage 4 and links with local primary schools to support their ICT development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement for all learners, particularly in the underperforming subjects.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school so that students make better progress.
- Ensure leadership is systematic and rigorous in analysing all aspects of the school's work to sustain improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with attainment which is a little below average and there are fewer more able students than in schools nationally. Last year standards improved in Year 9 but were still below average. This is partly due to the disappointing results in science and the relatively few numbers who achieve higher levels in the three core subjects. This represents satisfactory progress for most students.

The number of students achieving five or more good passes at GCSE has declined and standards in Year 11 are below the national average. Although results in English and mathematics were about the national average in 2007 those in other subjects are more variable with weak performance in some areas. Students did best in drama, ICT and mathematics and less well in French, history and PE. Most students with learning disabilities and difficulties make good progress. Students in the Access Centre, achieve well due to the high quality of support they receive and all transfer into further education or employment. The number of students who enter the school other than in Year 7 is high. This together with a lack of focus on raising achievement has contributed to the insufficient rate of progress in the past. Over the last year much has been done to improve the achievement of all students. Students' progress has been

closely tracked against more challenging targets. A range of intervention strategies have been put in place to support both individual and groups of students, for example the booster classes which students spoke very positively about. As a result, the school has convincing evidence that achievement at Key Stage 4 is now satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Their moral, social and cultural development is strong and there is a solid sense of community and inclusiveness within the school. Students form good relationships with their peers, teachers and other adults. Most students enjoy coming to school. However, although attendance has slightly improved recently, it still remains a little below average.

Students clearly recognise the importance of healthy living. The students themselves were instrumental in changing the lunchtime menu to one of healthier options, through the very active school council. Students make a good contribution to the community of the school and beyond. For example, volunteers in Year 11 train as mentors for Year 7 and 8 students or they involve themselves in outreach activities to local primary schools in the areas of drama, design and technology and ICT. The house system allows many students to assume roles of responsibility. The school's Green Team, of students from all years, has made strong contributions to ecological awareness and has won local and regional awards for their efforts. There is an active intolerance towards bullying. Students show that they are prepared for future economic well-being through good awareness of routes to follow and sound literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is improving as a result of regular monitoring of lessons, well targeted training and the sharing of good practice across departments. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers have good relationships with students and are successful in creating a motivating classroom atmosphere in which learning is enjoyable. They use a variety of teaching styles and well-adapted activities that enable most students to make good progress. Teachers and students, make effective and imaginative use of ICT and other resources. In some lessons however learning is not clearly defined, sufficiently imaginative or adapted to students' differing levels of ability. This can lead to passiveness or low-level disruption and as a result students do not make as much progress as they could.

The use of examiners' marking criteria helps students to more accurately assess and improve their work in preparation for their examinations. The quality of marking, however, varies between departments as some teachers do not always give students constructive advice on how to move their learning forward. Regular assessment and tracking students' progress is now a well-established routine in the school, although the information available about individual students' progress is inconsistently used in lesson planning.

Homework is set regularly. Teaching assistants are well-managed and deployed to help students who need additional support including those at an early stage of learning English and from the Access Centre.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is both broad and balanced and exceeds National Curriculum expectations in respect of students opting for Modern Foreign Languages in Year 10, although a small minority of students do not follow a discrete course in ICT. These students do use computers confidently and competently in their lessons for other subjects but there is no formal monitoring of coverage of the ICT National Curriculum. Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good.

The school has worked effectively to modify the curriculum and now it better matches the needs of students with a wide range of abilities and aptitudes. Gifted and talented pupils take advantage of an enhanced curriculum that includes GCSE Product Design in Year 9, GCSE Statistics in Year 10 and the opportunity to study three different sciences. Provision for less able students and those who benefit from a more work related curriculum is now strong after the introduction of a number of vocational courses, three of which are taught in collaboration with a local college. There are good indications that the new provision is having a positive impact on student achievement, however, it is not yet being systematically evaluated.

An overwhelming number of students participate in and speak positively about the rich range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that the school offers covering sports, the arts, including dance and drama, and activities such as debating and chess. Students also enjoy opportunities for organised trips, such as the recent football tour to Dutch schools and additional GCSE courses including those in ICT and music after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff at all levels are thoroughly committed to promoting students' well-being and achievement and this is valued by students. Safeguarding requirements are met.

Provision for supporting different groups of students with a wide range of social, emotional and academic needs is good; it is enhanced by three centres that provide safe and caring learning environments. For example, students in the Access Centre receive individualised teaching and exceptional care and guidance in support of their specific needs, which parents appreciate. Vulnerable students and those in danger of permanent exclusion are very well supported both by school staff and those from an outside agency who work within the Student Support Centre. Liaison between staff and those in the special centres to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are new to the school or at an early stage of learning English in mainstream lessons is good.

The school has rightly identified as a priority the need for greater coherence and efficiency in its tracking and target setting systems, and has set in place procedures for achieving this. This is enabling individual underachievement to be identified and support provided, particularly through the booster sessions. Students know their targets and current attainment levels well through termly reports on their progress. This assessment data is not always used consistently well to inform teaching and guide students onto the next steps of their learning. However, the provision of the new tracking systems is impacting positively on student progress, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and improving. The headteacher and restructured senior team are now providing clear focus and strategic direction for all staff and increasing the capacity in leadership and management. More effective use of performance data and a coherent approach to training, self-evaluation and performance management is leading to greater accountability for managers at all levels which are all having a positive impact on raising standards. The school has positively engaged with a range of support from Local Authority and external consultants and this is beginning to address the variation in standards in some subjects. The school is developing systems to monitor all aspects of the school's work. However, the outcomes are not always systematically and rigorously analysed in terms of strengths and weaknesses or impact to focus strategically on further improvement, for example, in teaching and learning or curriculum developments.

Inclusion and equality of opportunity is actively promoted and students feel cared for and secure, this is particularly exemplified for students in the Access Centre. Partnerships with other organisations, including other schools and a local college are good, particularly in relation to the school's specialist status, supporting students' personal development and enhancing curriculum opportunities.

Governance is satisfactory because governors are very supportive, increasingly well-informed and now have a good understanding of the current position of the school but they have not always provided sufficient challenge, particularly in relation to student achievement. Resources are well managed and after a period of financial difficulty, the school is now on a sound financial footing and provides satisfactory value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

21 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Raynes Park High School, London, SW20 0JL

On behalf of your inspectors, I would like to let you know that we enjoyed the time we spent with you on our recent visit. We would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us in meetings, lessons and around the school. We think that Raynes Park High School is an improving school that is providing you with a satisfactory education.

We hope that you will take the time to read the full report but I have highlighted the key points below.

- You and your teachers appreciate and make good use of the additional ICT resources provided as a result the specialist technology status.
- The progress you make in school is now satisfactory.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, and good in some lessons.
- Good systems are in place to track your progress and you are being given good support to raise your achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Your behaviour overall is satisfactory, although a few of you disrupt learning in some lessons.
- Your attendance at school has improved although it is still just below the national average.
- Your personal development is good and you show you care for the environment through the work of the Green Team.
- You make the most of the wide range of activities, events and trips that are provided.

To improve things further, we have asked the school to:

- raise standards and achievement for all learners
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that you all make better progress
- ensure that the impact of all aspects of school improvement is fully analysed.

You can help by attending school, arriving on time, focusing on your learning both in and out of lessons and continuing to make the most of the wide variety of opportunities offered.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett

Lead Inspector