

Ian Ramsey Church of England Aided Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111764
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	310680
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1175
School	
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend June Thomas
Headteacher	Mr Michael Davison
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Greens Lane Fairfield Stockton-on-Tees TS18 5AJ
Telephone number	01642 585205
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ian Ramsey Church of England School is larger than average. The majority of students are of White British heritage, but a small number are of minority ethnic origin. Students are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that seen nationally. The school attained language college status in 1999.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Standards are above average and students' achievement is good. All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language, progress well. There has been an improving trend in GCSE and vocational examination results over the last three years and standards in 2007 were the highest ever. Results at the end of Year 9 dipped that year compared to 2006 but younger students are now making better progress.

Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent. They are confident and articulate young people who have good basic skills and the personal qualities to succeed in the next stage of their education and in future employment. They behave exceptionally well and say they feel safe and secure in school. The school is a harmonious community and Christian values and sensitivity to the needs of others underpin its work. The learning ethos is outstanding. A few parents have expressed concern about behaviour but the inspection found it to be excellent and students report that occasional poor behaviour in lessons is dealt with promptly and effectively. Students show respect for each other and have a keen sense of right and wrong. Attendance is above average and students enjoy their work. They take advantage of opportunities to shoulder responsibility in school and they contribute to the local community through fund raising and charitable activities. The language college status has opened up opportunities for travel and for social and academic links with students from abroad.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and can convey their enthusiasm for their subjects to the students. Working relationships are excellent and students comment on how helpful their teachers are. There is inconsistency in the quality of feedback students get about the standard of their work and how to improve. When asked, some students were unsure about the level at which they are working and what they needed to know or do to improve. Lesson planning does not always make clear how the different learning needs of all students are to be met. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met however, because of the very good leadership of the special needs department and the care and support the students receive from staff.

The care afforded to every student in the school is exemplary. Students say they feel valued and that there is always someone to listen if they want to talk through problems. Very good support is given to vulnerable students. The work of the older students is monitored well and they receive timely and appropriate guidance or additional support if weaknesses are uncovered. Such tracking has been introduced for younger students and is resulting in better progress in Key Stage 3. The curriculum is good. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection in the provision for citizenship and in the range and quality of computer hardware and software available for teaching and learning.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership. Leaders and managers at all levels are committed to equality of opportunity for every student. This is an inclusive school where students from diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs are made to feel welcome and valued. Procedures for safeguarding students meet government requirements. Challenging performance targets are used to motivate students and these are often exceeded. Governors know the school well and work closely with staff to ensure that

students receive good care and support. The school is well staffed and resources are used well to give good value for money. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection and the school's capacity to improve further is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that lessons are planned to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Make better use of marking and oral feedback to give students a clearer view of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and students' progress and their achievement in relation to their starting points are good. All students, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not a first language, progress well. There has been an improving trend in the standards attained by the older students over the last three years. In 2006, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, was above average. The girls did significantly better than the boys in 2006 but results improved markedly in 2007 and the gender gap narrowed considerably. In 2007 the school exceeded its statutory performance targets.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been above average in English and mathematics and average in science over the three years to 2006. Results dipped in 2007 to levels typical of students of that age and so fell short of the challenging targets set. Measures taken by the school to monitor progress more closely and intervene quickly when weaknesses are uncovered are resulting in better progress in the work seen now.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of students is outstanding and a significant strength of school life. Students respect and follow the school's Christian values. This results in an excellent ethos for learning and very positive relationships between students and staff. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. They participate actively in collective worship and think sensitively about moral and spiritual issues. They are responsive to the needs of others, as the link with a school in Lesotho shows. Students are confident, articulate, well motivated and self-disciplined. Above average academic standards and outstanding personal development mean students are extremely well prepared for further education and adult life.

Students say they genuinely enjoy school and feel safe. They make informed choices for a healthy lifestyle. They are aware staff have high expectations of them. Many make a very positive contribution through involvement in the school council and in participating in an outstanding range and variety of extra-curricular activities, including physical education, drama, music and fund raising. Students are exceptionally well behaved and confirm that if there is occasional misbehaviour it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Attendance is above average and fixed term exclusions are few. Students say that incidents of racial harassment and bullying are rare and are dealt with firmly and well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They question well and give clear and concise explanations. Learning activities are varied and lessons have pace and opportunities for independent and collaborative working. Students enjoy these lessons because they are actively involved and make rapid progress as a result. In the best lessons, students' imagination, creativity and social responsibility are encouraged. Some teaching is less effective because work is not matched effectively to the full range of capability and needs. Students' work is marked regularly. The quality of marking and of oral feedback varies widely; in some cases, it results in students being uncertain about how they might improve their work or how much progress they have made in a lesson. The vast majority of lessons are characterised by mutual respect and the willingness of students to work productively with each other and their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is reviewed regularly and modified to ensure its continued effectiveness. It has improved since the last inspection, meets statutory requirements and contributes effectively to students' current good achievement. It includes recent national initiatives, particularly in enterprise education and work related learning. A good personal, social and health education programme, which includes citizenship, careers and enterprise education in addition to strong community links, makes an important and successful contribution to students' personal development. The language college status has established strong community and international links that contribute to students' outstanding personal development. The increasing number of older students following vocational courses or having a modified curriculum is a further characteristic of this good curriculum. Students benefit from the strong links with external providers such as Hartlepool College and from courses which meet their needs and the needs of the local community.

The provision and impact of extra-curricular activities are outstanding. For example, a four-day production of 'Grease' this year is a major feature of the school's performing arts provision. It is having a tremendous impact on the personal development of the many students who get involved. One girl commented on the spirit of teamwork and camaraderie that the production generated. 'It's amazing how people of different ages and types get along like family.'

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

This aspect of the school's provision is good. The care and support afforded to every student are exemplary. Bi-lingual support is available to those students for whom English is not their first language and very good help is given to those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The result is that they all progress well. Safeguarding and child protection procedures are established and meet statutory requirements. The school has gone some way in establishing a system for monitoring the progress of students, but feedback to guide their progress is inconsistent in its quality. Effective measures are used to promote students' health and safety and risk assessments are undertaken rigorously, especially when visits are organised

out of school. The school works well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that vulnerable students feel safe and supported and make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and he is well supported by his deputy and other senior colleagues. Self-evaluation is good and appropriate priorities are in place to improve provision and standards. They have made significant improvements in the climate for learning in the school through emphasising the values of care and respect for others. This is a calm and purposeful institution where students can learn without hindrance. There is a commitment at all levels to equality of opportunity for everyone. The result has been the significant rise in GCSE standards over a period of three years. Challenging performance targets are used to raise standards and they are often exceeded. The school knows how well it is doing and what it must do to improve; witness the emphasis now on tracking the progress of the younger students. The specialist language status has brought additional resources to the school as well as extending learning opportunities for all students. There is a good track record of improvement since the previous inspection and the school's capacity to get better is good.

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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?	2
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

13 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ian Ramsey Church of England Aided Comprehensive School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 5AJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team. I appreciated your openness and cooperation during our visit and enjoyed meeting many of you.

The inspection found that yours is a good school with many strengths and some outstanding features. GCSE examination results are consistently above average and have been improving rapidly over the last three years. Results at the end of Year 9, although above average, do not show the same improving trend over time and this is an issue the school is addressing. The inspectors were impressed with the calm and purposeful learning atmosphere around school and in lessons. This is because of your very positive attitudes to learning and the excellent working relationships you have with the staff.

Your personal development is excellent across the school and you are very well prepared for the next stage of your education and for future employment. You impressed the inspectors with your capacity for hard work and your ability to work independently without constant direction. You also have the ability to work well with others. Many of you spoke about the outstanding range of activities available outside of lessons, including visits away in this country and abroad.

Most of you know how well you are doing and what you have to do to get better. Some students are unsure and need better guidance on how to improve. The school is also going to work on making sure that everyone's learning needs are met in all lessons.

I wish you every success in your education and in your future careers.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead inspector