

Ryton Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108405
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	309682
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Farrow HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	1,264
School	1,067
6 th form	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adrian Hinchcliffe
Headteacher	Mrs Stephanie Howarth
Date of previous school inspection	February 2005
School address	Main Road Ryton Tyne and Wear NE40 3AH
Telephone number	0191 4132113
Fax number	0191 4134844

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	27–28 February 2008
Inspection number	309682

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ryton is a larger than average, popular, oversubscribed comprehensive school with an average sized sixth form. It serves the village of Ryton and other, mainly rural communities to the west of Gateshead. Students come from a variety of backgrounds, although a lower proportion than nationally are eligible for free school meals. Nearly all students are White British; less than one percent comes from a minority ethnic background. The number of students deemed to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average; whilst an average proportion have a statement of special educational need. The majority of students who arrive at school in Year 7 complete their statutory education there and an increasing proportion continues in the sixth form until the age of 18.

The school has been a specialist language college since 1999. It has achieved the International Schools Award and also holds the Healthy School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ryton is a good school with some outstanding features. It lives up to its ambition to be an inclusive school and to 'Develop positive relationships between students and staff and achieve an atmosphere of mutual respect where working together and consideration for others are paramount.' This has helped to promote students' outstanding personal development and build their self-esteem, tolerance and care for one another. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent; as a result, most take full advantage of their time in school and achieve well. Students are proud of their school and enjoy being active participants in its life and work; consequently attendance levels are well above average. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education, care, leadership and management, and the safety of their children. A very small minority believe that student behaviour could be improved but inspectors found it exemplary.

The school's outstanding pastoral care ensures that students are well supported and safe. The consistent and energetic focus on assuring students' well-being ensures that effective actions are taken early to help those most in need. The strong links between pastoral and academic departments also ensure timely support. The school has developed very effective partnerships with external agencies in its support of vulnerable students and in raising their aspirations. Nearly all students leaving school at 16 continue with their education or enter training or employment, and a growing number enter university from the sixth form.

Very good transition arrangements help new students settle into school quickly and the majority reach standards of attainment which are above and sometimes well above average, representing good achievement for most students. However, the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more variable and therefore satisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning are good overall. Good relationships and secure subject knowledge are common features of all lessons. In the more successful lessons these elements, together with a brisk pace and appropriate levels of challenge, ensure that students make good progress. Independent learning is exceptionally well developed in the sixth form, although in the main school there are still lessons where teachers are overly directive and opportunities for students to take responsibility for their learning are missed. On occasions, teachers do not match activities sufficiently to students' individual learning needs. Senior and middle managers monitor the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. However, the information from this monitoring is not used effectively at a strategic level to evaluate the difference it has made to the quality and consistency of teaching.

The curriculum is good and enhanced well by the language college specialism, extra curricular activities and appropriate vocational courses that meet individual needs. Improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have contributed to an improving trend in students' attainment and achievement. Students speak positively about opportunities to learn additional languages as well as enjoying making use of the additional resources that the specialism has brought. Global citizenship alongside the international school's award has promoted students' very good understanding and respect for diverse cultures from across the world. The specialism has also led

the way in the development and use of interactive information technology across the school and promoted excellent links with local primary schools through the sharing of language expertise and facilities.

Leadership and management are good and particularly responsive to the headteacher's outstanding vision and determination to secure the best possible outcomes for students. This common purpose is embraced by senior managers and governors, all of whom contribute to school improvement planning and together they set a very clear direction for the school's continuing improvement. The 'headlines' of the school improvement plan provide a clear rationale for the school's work and underpin the work of departments. However, the plan includes insufficient milestones or clear targets against which progress can be measured. Although senior leaders know the school's strengths and areas for improvement well, self-evaluation is not always based on critically reflective analysis of all the information the school has to hand. The school has addressed the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection well and has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The quality of education in the sixth form is good with several outstanding features. This enables students to achieve well on their chosen courses and often to make exceptional progress in their personal development. Teaching and learning are good. Over the last three years, results have improved well, further enhancing the school's good reputation. An increasing number of Year 11 pupils choose to join the sixth form where they recognise that they get a good deal and most who join complete the courses they embark upon.

As the school operates an open entry policy for sixth form recruitment, students' attainment on entry is broadly average and their above average results represent good progress over two years. Students make broadly average progress in the AS year of their A-level courses but by the end of two years, an above average proportion achieve pass grades at a level that enables them to continue into higher education. English and biology results are particularly strong. The recently introduced BTEC vocational courses are popular with students and results are good. Both academic and vocational, students benefit from some exceptional opportunities for independent learning and they develop key personal skills such as social awareness, and the ability to both be a team member and to organise others.

The sixth form enables students to develop into mature and confident young adults. They speak very positively about the opportunities that the school provides for them and value the wide range of courses and the level of help and guidance they receive. Students are particularly positive about the enrichment opportunities available through the many extra-curricular activities; for example the Culture Club and the Sports Leader programme. Target setting and the tracking of progress keeps them and their parents and carers fully informed about how they are getting on and triggers effective extra support when appropriate. However, the actual targets set for some students are not challenging enough.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good with some outstanding features; such as the focus on the development of a very positive atmosphere and in

the amount of individual help that students receive. These support the good quality of education students receive and the results that they obtain. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection, especially in standards, increased breadth in the curriculum and the tracking of students' progress. Capacity for further improvement is very good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure work in lessons is consistently matched to the needs of individual students.
- Increase the level of challenge in targets set for some A level students.
- Ensure the good range of information the school holds about its work is used effectively to measure the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

A good proportion of students' enter the school having reached above average standards in their primary schools. Test and examination results are at least above and sometimes well above average, reflecting the good progress made by students during their time in the school. The progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more variable and therefore satisfactory overall.

In 2007, Key Stage 3 test results in English, mathematics and science were well above average and a significant proportion of students reached the higher levels in each subject. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C was well above the national average and exemplified the school's upward trend in progress across Key Stages 3 and 4. The number of students gaining five good passes with English and mathematics included was slightly above the national average. The school has set about monitoring and supporting the progress of those middle ability students at risk of underachieving in either English, mathematics or both, to increase this proportion in 2008. School monitoring information indicates that the school is likely to meet its challenging Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 targets for 2008. The school has broadly met its specialist college targets and is taking action to remedy the relative underperformance in some of its specialist subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' outstanding personal development contributes significantly to the positive learning atmosphere in the school. Students greatly enjoy coming to school and enter into all aspects of school life enthusiastically. Consequently, their attendance is exceptionally high and the number of exclusions is well below average. Students' moral and social development is outstanding. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and as a result, learning time is used well. Students have an excellent understanding of a diversity of cultures and beliefs; for example, as seen in the active support provided for schools in Ethiopia. Peer mentoring, the school and year councils and various charitable activities demonstrate well students' understanding of social concern and responsible citizenship. Students understand the need to eat healthily and participate

enthusiastically in sport. They say they feel safe because of the atmosphere of mutual respect and they greatly appreciate the high level of emotional support and guidance that they receive from staff. They are confident that any difficulties that they may face including any incidents of bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively. During their time in the school, students develop as mature, articulate and confident young people and are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning across the school is good, although there are inconsistencies. Teachers draw on good subject knowledge to plan lessons well and to inform their teaching styles. Clear objectives usually enable students to understand the purpose of lessons. In the best lessons there is a range of interesting and challenging activities including good use of information and communication technology, open questioning, discussion, group and paired work. When managed well, these activities provide opportunities for students to work creatively and independently so that they enjoy what they do and make good progress. Teaching assistants effectively support the learning of those students who are experiencing difficulties in lessons.

In the main, teachers assess their students' progress well, but this is not always sufficiently focussed on less able individuals. Activities in some lessons are too teacher led and do not allow students to develop independent learning skills and confidence. Some lesson objectives are not as helpful as they could be because they indicate only a series of tasks; identifying what students will do rather than what they will learn. In less successful, but nevertheless satisfactory lessons, students did not learn as well as they could have done because teachers did not match activities well enough to what their students needed to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding elements. It is broad and balanced and offers a wide range of subjects. There is a good and clear emphasis on literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. The school's commitment to find courses that will raise the aspirations of all students has led to more vocational options and an alternative curriculum for the most vulnerable students. The school recognises that the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 can be better adapted to meet the needs of individual students and is taking action to remedy this. A good programme of personal, social, health and careers education, including an improving citizenship curriculum, contributes effectively to students' outstanding personal development. The school's specialist status has broadened provision in modern languages, although there is scope for more students to study two languages in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. The outstanding international element of the specialist language college status has enriched further a curriculum that offers a good range of activities to support students' learning. There

is also a strong programme of extra-curricular activities in sports, arts and academic subjects in which many students participate.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are fully committed to providing outstanding pastoral care. This commitment has had an extremely positive impact on students' personal development and continues to contribute to their sustained good progress across the school. There are good procedures for ensuring students' health and well-being and safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff understand students' social and emotional needs well and create a welcoming atmosphere that contributes to the students' feelings of safety and their enjoyment of school. Specialist status has enhanced the very good links with primary schools which ensure that students' transition to secondary school is smooth. Mentoring systems are especially effective in promoting students' self-esteem and helping them make good progress. In the main, teachers provide good guidance on what students need to do to improve their work. As a result, most students have a good understanding of their targets; although this is not consistently evident in their day-to-day work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive effective and well targeted support when they are withdrawn from lessons. At these times they make good and often very good progress. However, in lessons opportunities to build on this good work are missed and so these students make satisfactory progress overall.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher gives the professional development of staff a high priority and provides extensive opportunities to develop leaders, share good practice within the school as well as the wider educational community. Middle managers understand what is expected of them, feel empowered to take decisions and are accountable for the performance in their areas of responsibility. The innovative Heads of Department Conferences enable departmental heads to be creative and to develop whole school initiatives such as the Behaviour4 Learning strategy which has contributed to the excellent standards of behaviour seen in the school.

Governors provide outstanding support and challenge. They and senior managers are clear about the areas of the school that require improvement and to continue to move the school further in its developments. For example, senior leaders and governors have reviewed the provision for students who access learning support and are working to build capacity in that area. However, their proposals do not link clearly enough to the impact this additional investment will have on raising the achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Senior and middle leaders are committed to improving consistency in the quality of teaching and target setting across all departments. Financial management arrangements are robust and the school makes good use of its specialist school resources to benefit the whole school, the local community and wider educational community. It provides good value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
---	-----------------------	--------------

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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	1	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	1	
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 learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



29 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Ryton Comprehensive School, Gateshead, NE40 3AH

Thank you for welcoming the team so warmly when we visited your school. A special thanks to the school council who ensured we got to the right places as we visited classes. I would also like you to thank all of the parents and carers who completed and returned the inspection questionnaire. The vast majority who responded think the school is well led, believe you enjoy school, are making good progress in your learning and are well cared for and inspectors agree. Many of you also told us you like school, feel very safe and that there are many adults to help you when you need support and advice. We were impressed with your very good attendance and behaviour. You are a credit to your school and good ambassadors for it.

We found Ryton to be a good school with some features such as your personal development being outstanding. Mrs Howarth and the senior leadership team, along with the governors and staff work hard to help you realise your full potential. Ryton is an inclusive school where you are all well supported especially in times of need. At such times the school works very well with other agencies to provide the exact support you require. The support some of you receive in the mentoring room helps you to make good progress while you are there. We also found:

- many of you attain good results in tests and examinations, make good progress in your learning, and the quality of teaching you receive is good overall
- relationships between teachers and yourselves are good and you are caring and supportive of one another
- the school provides a good range of subjects you can study which are planned to meet your needs and interests; a wide range of extra curricular activities are available, many of which you attend and enjoy
- the sixth form is good and your ability to work independently whilst there is outstanding.

We have asked the school to do three things to help the school improve further:

- match work in all lessons so that it meets the needs of all students
- increase the level of challenge in the targets the school sets for some of you who are taking A levels
- ensure the good range of information the school holds about its work is always used effectively to evaluate the impact of actions they have initiated.

Thanks once again and on behalf of the team, I wish you all well during your time in school and in your future lives.

Best regards

Margaret Farrow HMI